



던전 디펜스
「03」

유한화 지음 · COOORIP 일러스트





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BRAVE NEW WORLD



— nothing at all.

Everything or —

Dungeon Defense (던전 디펜스) - Volume 03 by Yoo Heonhwa (유현화).

Published by Novel Engine (영상출판미디어) in 2016.

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**Will the humans collapse, Will the demons be
exterminated,**

—Or will everyone fall into ruin?

「Kill them all.」

The plague is spreading.

The humans claim the demons caused the epidemic.

The demons claim the humans caused the epidemic.

—Misunderstanding, scorn, and hatred become a bacteria more
atrocious than the Black Death, instantly consuming the entire
continent in flames.

As a calamity called a devastating war.

Here, a single man pours poison into the world.

Speech is power.

Prologue

The saying that life is a gamble was credible.

A person was good at war if they handled people like they did wagers. If people's lives were not treated as stakes, then a war where hundreds and thousands of lives were cut down would become hell. Barbatos stated that people cannot cross this living hell while sober.

“Above a diligent bastard is an insensitive bastard, and above an insensitive bastard is an insane bastard. That's why, if you want to win at war then you need to first become a crazy bastard.”

There was a mixture of laughter in Barbatos' words.

The laughter and cruelty on her face were indistinguishable. I could not tell if she was behaving like that in order to show me her amusement, or if it was because she wanted to broadcast her brutality to me. Although, personally, it felt like that indistinguishability was Barbatos' own madness.

I had sex with Barbatos frequently. Despite that, we did not share our feelings. I understood her deeply, but I was unable to fathom the very bottom. Barbatos was merely a diligent bitch, an insensitive bitch, and an insane bitch. And even to Barbatos, I was merely a lazy bastard, a keen bastard, and a psychotic bastard. Our preferences in bed matched. Since an insane bitch and a psychotic bastard had met, then they should be able to get along fine for the moment.

—Please spare us.

—If not this humble one, then at least this one's daughter.

—I will work as a hound for the rest of my life, so please forgive me.

Even to the group of humans captured as prisoners before us, Barbatos smiled. She had prepared for war since before the start of autumn. Since people were wagers in war, Barbatos had many reasons to be cruel. Only the prisoners did not know of the upcoming war. To them, Barbatos' smile only shone as unprovoked violence.

“Do whatever you guys want. Why are you asking me about your life and death? If you're going to live then live, if you're going to die then die.”

“Mm.”

I nodded. The language spoken by the humans and the language spoken by Barbatos were different, so I had to stand as an intermediate to interpret. The only person proficient at the human language while also being a Demon Lord was myself.

“She says to die obediently.”

The prisoners all lowered their heads to the ground at once.

—Because we are foolish, it is difficult to understand.

—Please decide what we must do.

“Oi, would you look at that?”

Barbatos snickered. The demon soldiers around her laughed as well.

“Dantalian. What are they babbling about?”

“They said your words are too damn vague, and want you to break it down for them so they can understand easier.”

“Tyaa, what an abundance of bullshit. If they live then that’s their life, and if they croak then that’s their death. Why should I care?”

I nodded my head.

I then translated her words exactly to the prisoners.

“This lady here said that you guys are quite full of shit.”

—Oh lord, forgive us!

—Please spare us from your anger!

The prisoners sobbed and the demons laughed once more. The weeping from the humans settled down low and fluttered, while the sound of laughter from the demons echoed upwards and dispersed. The sound of sobbing and laughter was boisterous, causing the pronunciation of words to be difficult and tremble. Words were enveloped by laughter and eaten away by laughter. Since it was difficult to handle the words on my own, I did what I could as it came and improvised.

If Barbatos asked.

“Is the provisioning situation in the empire decent?”

I would translate it as.

“She asked what you guys ate on average for all of your mugs to look so dirty like bums.”

And to the question.

“I heard that in your neighborhood the crown prince and the 3rd imperial princess are having a big fight over who’ll be the next emperor. Does their lively confrontation have any effect on you

citizens?”

I translated it as.

“They say the crown prince, after having scored two of his little sisters and then killing them off, is now trying to score his third little sister. What do you all think about this?”

Despite that, there were no problems in regard to communication.

It wasn't a joke.

In the first place, Barbatos was planning to execute all of the prisoners anyway. She was merely poking at the captives here and there half as a jest. It would be more honest to tell them to hastily prepare for their demise than providing them a false hope.

If you completely got rid of the laughter and sobbing that was like grime attached to the words.

—Die.

—We wish to live.

—Die anyway.

—We wish to live anyway.

Would remain cleanly.

It's so simple.

Occasionally, while pretending to be interpreting, I would throw completely random questions.

“What is your name?”

“Do you have any last words you wish to leave behind?”

“Prepare yourselves for death.”

Then, the peasants, having realized their approaching demise, wept.

Shortly after, Barbatos grew bored and severed the lives of the prisoners. The decapitated heads fell to the floor and rolled in separate directions. All of the heads had their mouths hanging agape with a certain word still lingering on their lips.

—.....

—.....

I stared at the wide open mouths. It was simply dark. I was unable to see the bottom past the throat.

Past the tongue, a path to hell lay in wait..... was the thought that crossed my mind.

Barbatos had said that in order to go to war while avoiding the path to hell, one must treat the lives of others like a wager. However, be it Demon Lords, emperors, demons, or humans, everyone lived their lives while having swallowed hell down past their tongues. The important matter wasn't avoiding hell or not..... was another thought that came to mind. The only thing that mattered was that, if there were people who threw up hell from their mouths, then there were people who held hell within their stomachs and endured it.

“Dantalian. Has the amount of humans we've killed reached roughly over a thousand now?”

“Who knows. Since this is the 22nd fire-fallow cultivating village we've burnt, it should be around there.”

Barbatos looked up into empty space.

She muttered.

“Then we’re still lacking..... Let’s burn a bit more. If we hold back in our slaughter here, then many of us will die instead.”



Chapter One

Wordless Sounds

—Let's burn a bit more.

The words spoken in a light tone by Barbatos climbed over the mountain ranges and set villages ablaze. Since the start of autumn, we've spent our time burning ravines and setting the feet of mountains aflame. Although it appeared as if the flames were burning on their own, it wasn't a coincidence that the areas we set ablaze always had a fire-fallow cultivating village located there. Many people were burnt to death.

We asked each other in a nonchalant tone.

"How many people have you killed today?"

"I wonder. I think I've burned around 30."

"This kid. You're still completely wet behind the ears, aren't you? I've burned 70 people today alone."

"Sure. Good for you."

That was our way of greeting one another.

At first, the nobles in the humans' society did not take any actions whether the fire-fallow villagers died or not. These village people were of the lowest class. Once autumn passed and winter approached, and the amount of slash-and-burn villages we've burned to the ground reached over 30, was when the human army began to move at last.

The human scouts were slow. We released the witches' familiars and used them to observe the human forces. Surprisingly, the human troops were not moving in order to rescue the peasants. Anything that tried to avoid the inferno and escaped down the mountain, be it

peasant or goblin, the human army hunted them down indiscriminately.

If we burned one side of the mountain range, then the imperial soldiers were dispatched, if we burned the other side of the mountain range, the soldiers from the kingdom were dispatched. Armies started to slowly move around more frequently. The soldiers were pushing their way through the smoke to find the culprits who had burned down the fire-fallow villages. However, the only thing remaining was the black smoke which warmly welcomed the scouts with open arms. I wonder if that desolation felt awkward, the scouts needlessly sliced the noses off the corpses of villagers and goblins before departing. Noseless corpses were scattered around on the ground.

“What’s this?”

Barbatos smirked.

“What the hell are those guys trying to pull?”

“They’re trying to set things back to as if nothing has happened.”

“Set things back? What are they trying to set back?”

“Restore something that can’t be restored. It can’t be helped since the forest fire has already happened, but if they get rid of all the witnesses to have seen the forest fire, then that’ll be the same as the fire not having happened in the first place.”

“It wasn’t even the peasants or the goblins who started the fire, but why are they shifting the responsibility to them?”

“By making them take the responsibility, the soldiers avoid the blame.”

“But what’ll happen if the peasants inform the king?”

“That’s why they’re killing them all.”

.....In the humans' society, peasants are not considered as citizens so they don't have the right to accuse someone of a crime to the king.....this was something I didn't go out of my way to tell her. The class system among demons was similarly strict. Myself, who was in a relationship with an outcast was weird, and Barbatos who was in a relationship with that weird me, was also weird.

Barbatos groaned.

“They're incomprehensible people. And since they're incomprehensible, they can't be associated with. Are all humans like that?”

“The majority are born like that.”

The cloud of smoke rising from the ashes and flames enveloped the mountain range.

One day, Barbatos ordered a witch to kill one of the scouts. The witch, after having murdered the soldier, brought back his report. Barbatos furrowed her brows. The report was not written in a cryptogram but in plain texts.

—The fire-fallow villagers are starting fires while fighting against the goblins. The villagers are setting ablaze the goblin habitats, and the goblins are doing the same to the peasant villages. There is a lot of smoke. It is difficult to breathe. The mountain range is burning.

□ Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 12, Day 6
Niflheim, Governor's Palace

The diligent movement of the human armies appeared suspicious in the eyes of the demons. A rumor spread in the demon world. It was a rumor mixed with doubt.

— Seems those guys intend to cross over the mountains and invade us.

— They're claiming that us demons were the ones to have spread the Black Death, so I'm worried that they'll use that as a reason to gather a large army.

On the streets, people could not tell the difference between suspicion and certainty.

A groundless rumor that the humans made the Black Death on purpose, with the intent to kill us, circulated. There were people who objected by saying, 'What a bunch of bull. We're not Gods, so how could people possibly create a plague?' and disregarded it as a false rumor. But, although the humans may not have created the Black Death, they still firmly believed that us demons had produced it anyway. Thus, there was some truth in the saying that we had to be cautious from now on. In any case, the humans needed a subject of criticism. They could reproach their neighbors but that would be pointless. They could resent the Gods but that would be hopeless. The humans bit down on the easiest thing to criticize, the easiest to blame, and the easiest to resent; the demonkind. Since their monarch, their emperors, and their nobles wouldn't want to be chewed out, they

passed on all of their responsibilities to the demons. Regardless, no one could respond when asked what they were going to do about it.

It's something the Demon Lords will decide, not us low-class people..... That was the majority opinion. In the vacant area with no answers, people gathered every day and repeated the same words. I sent out spies and controlled the dynamics of the rumors.

Once the groundless rumors and the false rumors mixed together, the contents of the words were no longer important, the volume was.

'Since long ago, humans have always been a race of unsociable barbarians, so we should exterminate them before they try to mess with us', these words resonated the loudest and above all.

The voices overflowed from the center of the plaza to the streets of the markets, and to the alleyways. Until eventually, the voices flooded into the palace of the Demon Lords.

—Kill all of the humans!

Shouts burst out in the conference room.

The Demon Lords were gathered in the governor's palace of Niflheim and were shouting respectively. The low-ranking Demon Lords clamored loudly, while the high-ranking Demon Lords remained silent. It seemed like the higher ranking Demon Lords were waiting for the voices to naturally rise up from the bottom.

— It's winter now, so how do you expect us to raise an army?

— It may be difficult for us in the winter, but it'll be more difficult for those weak humans. That's why winter is the best time for us to

invade. It's even better since the rivers will be frozen, so there'll be nothing to block our path.

— Our soldiers will all freeze to death before they can get across the mountains.

— Our warriors are courageous, so they won't fall to something like winter wind!

— That's right!

— Would you look at that? It appears that amongst the Plains Faction, it's a trend to learn how to bark like a dog before learning how to think first.

— I'm not really sure about that. But I do know how to beat an ill-mannered son of a bitch like a dog.

— Be quiet over there.

There was no logic in the voices yet. If we were to go to war, then when and where would we do it? If we were to not go to war, then for what reason would we not do so? What will we do about the provisions? What will we do about the military funds.....?

The voices were obscured as if they were buried under smoke. Only after the low ranking Demon Lords argued for a long period of time, would then the voices stack up piece by piece until they eventually formed a tower, like taking the shape of a 5 w's and 1 h^[1] structure, and finally making the words coherent after doing so. The leaders of each faction seemed to wish to argue while on the peaks of those towers, where the smoke was clear.

— We gathered here to chat, did we not? Or are we gathered here to keep our mouths shut? Once they've run out of things to jabber

about, they'll remain quiet even if they want to keep rambling.

— Even if our soldiers are able to endure the winter cold by relying on their willpower, what are you going to do about obtaining provisions? Even if we acquire provisions by commandeering and pillaging, then how do you plan to deal with the plague? You all may be brave, but you're merely overflowing with excessive words and stand out as reckless instead.

— What are you talking about? Say it easier so we can understand.

— If there are people who are able to understand difficult words, then there are people who are unable to comprehend even the easiest of words. This is not an issue on my side, but a dilemma with your intelligence. If I were to speak a bit more fundamentally, then your personality is a problem as well.

— Now I'm able to understand a bit.

— You two over there, please quiet down.

— You told us to ramble a second ago, but now you're telling us to be quiet? I don't get it. This guy is really prattling as he pleases.

— You got that right. Or perhaps, maybe he's telling us to shut up so he can ramble on his own? What a bad person. Hey, despite how I look, I'm still rank 12. Zepar, what's your rank? Are you higher than me?

— My mistake. Your point is correct. I am not certain about the others, but there is a need for Sitri and Beleth to be silent. If both the rock head of the Mountain Faction and the rock head of the Plains Faction are to clamor at the same time, then things become hectic. At this rate, everyone will have a headache.

— Did that guy just say that I was dumb?

— It's a relief that you were able to understand that since I didn't mean anything else besides that.

- What are you all talking about right now?
- It's none of your business.

The meeting continued throughout the whole night.

Since the majority opinion seldom came together, the words converged like smoke for a moment before dispersing back out. The fumes that Barbatos and I had raised since autumn had traveled past the mountains, disrupted the borders and were now gathered in this conference hall of Demon Lords. Their vision was clouded. The summit could not be seen. There were no signs of their words being able to penetrate the fog. The high-ranking Demon Lords stayed silently seated for more than 6 hours.

“That’s enough.”

The leader of the Mountain Faction, Demon Lord Paimon, opened her mouth.

“Please stop. Everyone, do you not feel dizzy? This lady feels light-headed. Since no one is turning their ears to the words of others, conversations are unable to be shared, since conversations are unable to be shared, they do not gather, and since they do not gather they are unable to flow, and thus becomes blocked. Where is this place? It is suffocating.”

The meeting room became still.

The Demon Lords, who were exchanging curses up till now, shut their mouths before the rank 9th Paimon. Instead of having no words to say, it seems they were just apprehensive to give a response.

Previously, Paimon had tried to accuse me of a crime in this location and was met with a disastrous defeat. Although Paimon’s reputation may have fallen due to that incident, she was still in command of the highest amount of Demon Lords. People referred to

Paimon and her remnants as the Mountain Faction.

The Demon Lords that belonged to the Mountain Faction had built their castles in the deepest part of the mountains to prevent humans from approaching them with ease. This resulted in their name, 'Mountain Faction'. A location that was difficult to be approached by the human forces, was also an area that was difficult to leave for the demon armies. It was peaceful. Naturally, since it was problematic to go both in and out, there were few struggles. The Demon Lords from the Mountain Faction were reluctant to go to war against the human armies. To them, cowardice was their deliberation, thus a massive war was forthwith a vice. According to Paimon and her remnants, they were protecting the peace of demonkind.

However, in consonance with Socrates' hypothesis, the name Mountain Faction originated from something completely different. It was called Mountain Faction because Paimon's chest was as lofty as the mountains. Paimon, along with her massive mountains, protected the Demon Lords, and the Demon Lords submitted to her maternal instinct. Socrates referred to Paimon and her remnants as the Big Breast Faction.

Bonjour—.

Paimon spoke.

“What proof is there that the human army is going to invade our land?”

—.....

“I see. There is no evidence. If there is no proof that their side is going to attack our side, then for what reason do we have to assault them from our side first?”

—.....

“Everyone. Our people are fatigued by the plague. Instead of searching for justifications that do not exist, we should supply our profits which are lacking and solidify our domestic affairs.”

“Wow—. Hey, hey, would you look at the way that thoughtless bitch is talking?”

The leader of the Plains Faction, Barbatos, spoke.

Barbatos and the group of her followers resided in Demon Lord Castles built on extensive plains. The humans and demons fought endlessly for the fertile land. Before people could grow tired of the everlasting battle, a new generation was born and inherited the battle anew. War repeated. Different to people who are able to pass the battle on to their descendants, a new generation for the land to pass on the raging battle did not exist. The land remained in place and continued to receive the constant traces of battle. For hundreds of years, the ground repeated the process of receiving scars and healing itself. After 300 years, the land no longer had the fertility to bear even a single grain of wheat or an ear of barley. The ground had met its fate, and yet the war continued. Barbatos and her gang, who persisted this utterly unfounded battle, were referred to as the Plains Faction.

The Demon Lords in the Plains Faction were trying to find something in a land that had nothing left. Like how beggars would embellish poverty as honesty and priests would claim weakness was kindness, the Demon Lords changed ‘having no reason to fight’, to ‘not needing a reason to fight in the first place’. To them, war itself was sacred. Since we don’t have anything, we need to have something, was their logic. Were they not a bunch of people with loose screws in their heads?

However, according to Karl Marx’s theory, the name Plains Faction

emerged from something entirely unrelated. It was called Plains Faction because Barbatos' chest was as spacious as the great plains. Like an open field, Barbatos accepted the Demon Lords, and the Demon Lords were touched by how commodious she was. Karl Marx referred to Barbatos and her gang as the Flat Chest Faction.

C'est si bon—[\[2\]](#)

“Oh, look at these village folks. Are you all planning to quietly watch as this bitch says shit like that? Seeing as her mug is annoying, that means there's no thought in her words, and seeing that there's no thought in her words, then that means there's no brain in her head, and seeing that there's no brain in her head, then that makes her plain shit ascend to bullshit and run wild. If you don't stop that bitch now, then she's the type of whore to become self-conceited about heaven and earth and go completely insane on all sides.”

“.....”

Paimon let out a deep sigh.

She had an expression on her face that said she was expecting this.

Lowering her gaze that was looking up at the ceiling, Paimon spoke.

“How pitiable. If this lady's face is annoying then that would represent the lack of intelligence in your head, and if this lady's words are thoughtless then would that not represent how your life has no answers? Since living a life with no answer is pathetic, why not commit suicide right now?Oh dear. This lady apologizes. If you were to commit suicide then that would mean you'd have come to the realization that your life indeed has no answers, but there's no intelligence in Barbatos' head, right? This lady forgot for a moment.”

I wanted to stand up and give them a round of applause.

Indeed, they were Barbatos and Paimon.

It was worthwhile to have withstood my boredom for a good 6 hours and repetitively play porn inside of my head.

I've lived until now solely to witness these two argue. They knew how to swear beautifully. In accordance to Barbatos' flat chest, her vulgar language was spread out roughly, and in consonance to Paimon's ample bosom, her curses were curved indirectly. Neither side were normal breasts. That was so. They weren't normal breasts.....

.....

Was that not right?

Was it their ability that was abnormal and not their breasts?

Or did something like that not matter?

Everything in front of me felt like it was slightly spinning. It was strange. If you exclude earlier today, where I got along with Miss Farnese while smoking together, I did nothing else throughout the day. And that was also something I enjoyed for a very brief moment of time before coming to the conference hall.

Well, there were days like this occasionally.

Adieu—.

Mademoiselle—.

“War is not negotiable.”

Paimon spoke.

“It is not a civil war where we quarrel and bite at each other, but a massive war against the entire human race. Thousands of people will lose their lives and hundreds of thousands of people will be injured. Please weigh the mass of these numbers. These are not lives that can be handled without a proper justification.”

“Heeh. So you’re saying that if we have a pretext, then war is possible?”

“That is something to decide when that time comes. This lady is saying to present proof first. If this is not taken care of beforehand, then discussing the outbreak of war now is premature.”

Barbatos smiled.

“The humans have been preparing for war since the start of autumn.”

“The evidence?”

“Regardless of the border, the humans have been wandering around the Black Mountains. If they pass the mountain range then they’ll be in our territory. The humans are planning to clear out the path before going on a full-scale invasion.”

“What do you mean by, ‘clearing the path’.....?”

“There are orc and goblin villages on the mountain range. The human knights are burning down every single one of those villages. What do you think the reason is? They’re most likely getting rid of all the cumbersome obstacles that are on the mountains which they plan to advance through.”

Barbatos spoke confidently.

It was a lie.

The culprits to have set the mountain range on fire were Barbatos and I.

The human troops only trailed after us while going through the smoke clouds that we raised. They were simply clearing up the monster habitats as they chased after us. Between autumn and winter, rural villages were swept away and monster habitats were crushed. While pushing our way through the smoke, we played a

game of hide and seek with the human troops. The other Demon Lords were unable to see the fumes rising from the frontier of the mountain range. With a skillful lie, Barbatos was pulling in the cloud of smoke, which the Demon Lords were unable to see, into the conference room.

— Oho, the Black Mountains are a strategic point among strategic points, after all.

— It's quite troubling that the humans are occupying the entrance of the pathway to our land, on their side of the mountains.

— What weird fellows. What could they possibly gain from starting a fight with us?

— The humans being buffoons is nothing new. People who were fools the day before will still be fools the next day.

— But you're foolish most of the times and occasionally clever, though? I'm conflicted on whether you're actually dim-witted or not. And honestly, contemplating this just makes me think that you're even more of an idiot.

— That's proof that I'm actually smart. Like how a black dot on a white sheet of paper is still just a black dot, if someone is mostly moronic and sometimes resourceful, then that just means they're smart. Therefore, I'm wise.

— What are you all talking about right now?

— It's none of your business.

The Demon Lords stammered like a bunch of blind people.

“.....”

Paimon glanced at Barbatos with a scrutinizing gaze. Her eyes were sharp. They had the strength to not be disoriented by the smoke-like voices and stare directly at the other party. Instead of receiving that straight gaze, Barbatos let it flow to the side.

“It’s not only the villages on the mountains that were assaulted. Dantalian here was attacked by the imperial soldiers of Habsburg and lost his Demon Lord Castle.”

“Dantalian did.....?”

Paimon raised her brows.

It appeared as if she had heard an unexpected name in an unexpected passage.

Paimon turned her gaze towards me. Even the Demon Lords, who were clamoring like the blind a second ago, all turned to look at me at once. I could feel many gazes on me through the dark conference room. They were the eyes of beasts. If I were to fumble my response here, then those eyes would turn into mouths and tear me apart.

“Dantalian, are Barbatos’ words true?”

“Yes. They are the undeniable truth. The army of Margrave von Rosenberg trampled my Demon Lord Castle.”

“When was this?”

“It was from the 9th month and 16th day to the 9th month and 17th day of this year. Through the course of three battles, I lost two times and barely won once. The margrave’s army used gunpowder to bury my castle. Truthfully, since my Demon Lord Castle was destroyed, it shouldn’t be considered a win even if I did obtain victory in the end.....”

I smiled bitterly.

“What were their numbers?”

“At the least, 2000. At most, 3000. They were not conscript soldiers. They were elites. After interrogating one of the prisoners, they confessed that they were hired.”

“.....Are there no mistakes?”

“I had used the hired soldiers here in Nifflheim to fight back against the margrave. There should be some soldiers nearby who have fought with me on that day, so you can ask them personally. The words they say and the words I have said will not differ.”

The conference room became perturbed. The human army had already been dispatched once. The Demon Lords were startled by that fact.

“I asked the prisoners why they had invaded my castle, and they disclosed everything. That according to the margrave, the demons had spread the Black Death, and that the cure to the disease was stored in large amounts in each Demon Lord Castle. That’s why, if humans like them wished to survive, they had no other choice but to attack the Demon Lords.....”

“.....”

“This is all the truth. At first, I thought that I was the only one to have been invaded. However, to my alarm, were the human armies not constantly wandering the vicinity of the mountains? Nervous and overwrought, I kept an eye on the human armies since the beginning of autumn. Habsburg Imperial forces, troops from the Kingdom of Teuton, soldiers from the Polish-Lithunian Kingdom..... The human forces disregarded the border and set the mountains aflame. They may have come to an agreement of some sort in secret. Going further than that, they may even be in an alliance.....”

The meeting room froze. The winter wind from outside the palace seeped all the way into here. Someone, unable to endure the silence, spat on the floor. Infected by that, a couple of the Demon Lords cleared their throats. Their throats were crowded with phlegm.

- Are the humans trying to start another war?
- The last massive war was 150 years ago, so it's about time for another one.
- If it's the smoke rising from the Black Mountains, then I often saw that as well.
- What? Why are you telling us this now?
- Forest fires happen often during the autumn, so I didn't think too much of it.
- Try to live while actually thinking.
- I may live without much thought, but you live without a mother. Since it's the same that both you and I live our lives without a certain something, just look over this.
- This goat's asshole!?

These guys died to the humans because they deserved to die, huh.

In the original timeline, all of the Demon Lords would be subjugated within the next 30 years. I wasn't able to tell while in the position of the humans while playing the game, but after seeing these Demon Lords in person, I understood. These people wouldn't do.

On the other side of the mountains, the humans were advancing their society through feudalism and absolute monarchy, but these fellows called Demon Lords were still doing antics similar to that of tribes. Although the rank 14th and rank 9th were rambling as if they were on a high horse, if you looked at it factually, this was a state of affairs consisting of 72 tribes each led by the rank 1st to the rank 72nd Demon Lords respectively. Demon Lords were only kings and queens

by name, but they were actually closer to being tribal leaders.

30 years.

A time limit of 30 years.

The countdown has begun. Before the countdown went too far in, there was a need to crush the human influences. The lightning has already hit. It was just that people have not heard the thunder yet.

“Everyone. Of course, I am merely a rank 71st youngster. Despite that, even I am able to see with these eyes that our situation is dire..... We must prepare for war. If we do not prepare, then we must at least be alert. Is that not the right decision?”

Now then, obediently accept my appeal.

If left alone, then you will all perish. If you were all to succumb, then the demon influence will weaken and I will fall into danger as well. We are a group sharing a common destiny. Even you all will most likely dislike meeting an untimely demise by the hero's blade. I will arrange a battlefield suitable for people with a Demon Lord status. Do not worry and do not refuse.....

“People who are prepared shall triumph, and people who are alert shall not be defeated. I lost my castle because I was unprepared and inattentive. Please, I request that you all do not commit the same mistake as I have.....”

▯ King's Lover, Mixed Blood, Lapis Lazuli
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 12, Day 6
Niflheim, Governor's Palace

People who are prepared shall triumph, and people who are alert shall not be defeated, so please do not commit the same mistake as I have.....

His highness' appeal was well-arranged.

Although reasoning was set up by his words, he did not use that logic to attack others. He mentioned his past experience of failure but did not remain there. His words were fierce, and yet, his tone was gentle. Therefore, it was beautiful.

The other Demon Lords nodded their heads. The Plains Faction approved the idea of preparing for war, while the Mountain Faction agreed to the notion of being alert.

She most likely had a sense of crisis once the atmosphere flowed more towards the topic of war. The advocate of peace, Paimon, stood forward.

“Dantalian. This lady too feels great regret because your Demon Lord Castle was assaulted.”

The Demon Lords turned their ears towards the conversation between these two. His highness Dantalian and Paimon had already clashed against one another in the past. At that time, Paimon met a devastating defeat. How was it going to end up this time? Was the kind of expectation that was flowing through the room.

“However, it is difficult to resolve ourselves to go into a massive war

by turning the entire human race into our enemy, solely because you alone were attacked. This lady shall assist in the reconstruction of your castle, so.....”

His highness smiled.

“Thank you very much, Miss Paimon. But I shall refuse. I do not feel any particular regret by the loss of my Demon Lord Castle. In the small chance that I did feel pity due to that incident, the occasion of myself borrowing the hand of you, Miss Paimon, will never occur.”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“The reason Margrave Rosenberg had attacked me is very simple. He had obtained the rumor from somewhere that an endless amount of black herbs were piled up in my Demon Lord Castle. It seems the margrave firmly believed that I was the culprit behind spreading the Black Death.Is it not intriguing?”

The Demon Lords stirred.

The pretext that his highness had just revealed aligned with the accusation that Paimon made towards his highness in the previous Walpurgis Night. Demon Lord Paimon and Margrave Rosenberg shared the same awareness..... this was most likely peculiar in no small measures to be considered as a simple coincidence.

Perhaps Paimon circulated the wild rumor intentionally?

This sort of suspicion was sufficiently plausible.

“I am curious. Where could the margrave have possibly acquired such information from? Ah, of course, I am not doubting you, Miss Paimon. We are all kinsmen, after all. Something like a traitor who would sell out their own kind, there are none in this conference room. Is that not so?”

“.....”

“The Margrave most likely has an independent information network spread throughout the demon world. The Margrave came in contact with this groundless rumor by chance through that, that is my assumption. Do not worry. Miss Paimon, you do not have any direct responsibility. Yes, direct responsibility.....”

Paimon’s face became stiff.

It was a tactful change of subject.

Even if Paimon did not spread the rumor in the human world, it was still the undeniable truth that she had circulated it in the demon world. If the Margrave did obtain the wild rumor from the demons, then the fault would go all the way back to Paimon who created the false rumor in the first place. It could then be viewed as Paimon having contributed in the destruction of his highness’ castle.

Speaking explicitly—Why should I receive help from the culprit who brought down my castle, was the cynical undertone that his highness was talking with. Paimon was at a loss for words. Towards that Paimon, his highness was gazing at her with naive snake-like eyes.

“It is alright. That incident was nothing more than something which arose completely due to the wicked greed from the humans..... To be concerned with the right or wrong among one another would not be a sensible thing to do here. No, it may be different on a normal occasion, but our current situation is urgent. We cannot start an internal conflict during this state of emergency where the human forces could invade us at a moment’s notice.”

“.....”

This was indeed, a skillful wordplay.

After his highness had defined our current situation as an emergency, he suggested that if this was perhaps a normal occasion, then he would have reproached Paimon. In order to dodge the blame here, Paimon could only agree.

That is so. As much as our current situation is dire, there is no need to start a needless internal conflict. She was most likely thinking along these lines.....

It was a checkmate.

If she wanted to disapprove of the war then she had to prove that our current situation was a normal occasion. However, if she wanted to avoid the blame, then she had to accept the state of emergency. Paimon was placed in a double-bind dilemma.

Paimon bit her lips.

“.....It is snowing outside.”

“Pardon?”

“This palace is forlorn. Do your bones not feel cold?”

What was this sudden question? I could not comprehend the meaning or the intention. His highness Dantalian tilted his head as well and asked back.

“Should we order the maids to stoke up the fire?”

“It is already near midnight. Would there still be maids doing their shifts now?”

“That is an unnecessary concern. Would the attendants go to sleep while the lords are still awake?”

“I see. That is so, isn't it?”

Paimon stared at his highness.

“We are lucky to be kings. Even if we were to stay up throughout the night, there are plenty of servants to kindle our flame. If our armies are dispatched now, then they will have to go through the winter mountains and streams with their bare bodies. Although we have maids devoted in taking care of our well-beings, who will light

the bonfires when our soldiers are cold?”

“.....”

“This lady estimated the wind on her path to this palace. This winter is especially arid. The earth is frozen all the way to its inner layer because of this icy weather and is difficult to dig through with spades. It will most likely take half a day to merely embed pickets into the soil and erect an encampment. While advancing through the winter fields, our soldiers will tire out on their own and collapse. This lady is immensely concerned that everyone’s vision is blocked by the palace walls and are unable to reach the cold winter plains.”

“.....Miss Paimon.”

Surely.

That was a valid rebuttal.

To not oppose war itself, but to oppose the time of war. It also displayed the worry for one’s subordinates as a Demon Lord, so it appeared graceful as well.

“If we raise an army, then our forces will cross the mountains and travel through forests. Trees to use as firewood will be abundant. Therefore, our troops collapsing due to being unable to kindle a campfire, is a needless worry.”

“Dantalian. The task of crossing the mountains and splitting the firewood is all managed by our soldiers. Will our troops not be miserable?”

“Then should I split the firewood myself and present it to the soldiers?”

His highness gave an unabashed laugh.

“You have many worries, Miss Paimon. Although I am not unaware of your highness’ innate virtue of taking care of your

subjects, when handling military affairs, one requires not benevolence but austerity. A sovereign's anguish will be transmitted to the general, and the general's woe will be transmitted to the soldier. The entire country will then advance with concern and retreat with concern, therefore, even if one were to obtain victory once, it will not be proper, and if one were to be defeated a single time, then they will be unable to recover. Since when did us demons worry about a campfire while going to war?"

The shouts, "That's right!", erupted from here and there.

Although I personally considered Paimon's reasoning to be logical..... the overall majority of Demon Lords did not. They did not pay any mind to the minor things. It wasn't only Demon Lords, but most demons believed in this idealism as well.

His highness Dantalian was different. His highness utilized this idealism. His highness utilized everything. He manipulated the things people enjoyed, and exploited the things people despised. His highness claimed that this attitude of taking the use of all things was called being pragmatic. One day I asked, 'If that is so, then where is pragmatism useful?'. His highness gave an immediate response.

Authority.

Having authority itself was good, and the very fact of not having authority was bad, so I did not question the basis any further. I was convinced by that irrational remark. My mind and his highness' mind were alike.

"For the past 500 years, we've raised a massive army 7 times and withdrawn 8 times. Each time our forces were pushed back, we withdrew our territory as well. And now, we've been chased back behind the mountains. If we are to be defeated this time as well, then we will have to yield to them the inner portion of the mountain range. This lady is anguished over the future of our kind."

"That is correct. The worry which Miss Paimon has, I too, am concerned for as well. Despite that, should we not aim for this current

situation where the humans' vitality is on the decline due to them suffering from the plague?"

"The disease is indiscriminately affecting both the humans and demons, so why....."

"I am still in possession of a large amount of the herbs which can triumph over the disease. I would like to offer these for one tenth the current market price as military supplies."

"....."

"Please spread this information wide amongst the people. That to the officers and men who apply for military service, be they from a high or low class, they shall be provided the cure. I shall offer 10,000 black herbs within the military. So everyone, please take the herbs and distribute them freely."

In truth, the meeting was concluded by that one statement.

His highness, rank 71st Dantalian, had offered an enormous amount of military supplies. Demon Lords that were of a higher rank than his highness had no other choice but to keep their heads down in order to save face.

A slight amusement glided past the corners of his highness' lips.

He was most likely certain of his own victory.

.....That was a bit unfair.

Every time I witnessed that side of his highness Dantalian, that thought crossed my mind. I recalled the connection his highness and I shared before the meeting was held today.



Just before the conference, his highness was smoking gaya.

Gaya is an item of personal preference similar to cigars. Since they are both easier to be intoxicated by and have no addictive properties compared to cigars, they are incredibly expensive. The asking price is extensive. His highness favored this elegant luxury item.

His highness did not enjoy this on his own, but he dragged Miss Laura De Farnese along as well and ruined their lives together. Today as well, once I entered the bedroom I witnessed the two of them behaving like a pair of worms squirming around on the floor.

It was a grand spectacle.

It felt like a group of drug-addicted hoodlums would show more moderation than these two.

I approached his highness and slapped his cheek.

“Lord Dantalian. Please come to your senses.”

His highness looked up at me with dull eyes.

“Mademoiselle.....Madem—?”

“The meeting will be held in 2 hours. Forty Demon Lords will be attending. It is the Walpurgis Night. Does your highness plan to put yourself to shame during such an occasion as well?”

“Bonjour—?”

This was wrong.

Leaving his highness alone, I approached Miss De Farnese. Once I drew near, Miss Farnese stood abruptly. And then did she not spread both of her arms out horizontally? I was at a loss for words for a moment by this bizarre conduct.

“.....Miss. What are you doing right now?”

“This young lady is a tree.”

“A tree?”

“Because I am a tree, I cannot answer your question. Trees have no words.”

“.....”

She was a bit insane.

I pondered if I was going to have to handle, with this peasant body, the honor of being the very first person in all of history to speak with a plant. Regardless, it appeared much easier to converse with the miss than his highness. To have to choose between a man who had regressed back into a toddler and a girl who had become a human plant. It was the extremity of choices.

“Exactly when did you become intoxicated?”

“This young lady isn’t intoxicated, though?”

Surely.

“Then I will change the question. When did you start smoking?”

“Mm. That is quite the religious question.”

Miss Farnese nodded her head with an emotionless face.

“This young lady has a question as well. Will you answer?”

“Yes, as long as it is not a question concerning the vegetation of trees.”

“Why is it bright outside the window all of a sudden? It was clearly dark a second ago. That is rather unusual. It seems the sun has gone insane.”

The thing to have gone insane is not the sun, but you.

.....My head hurt.

It seems his highness and the miss have been smoking gaya throughout the entire night.

When it was his highness alone, I was able to tighten the regulations of his highness' household, but after Miss De Farnese squeezed in, everything became tangled. His highness continued to teach the miss detrimental habits, and the miss accepted everything with open arms. It was like a baby bird shoving its beak towards the mother bird's mouth to receive food. From drinking habits, sleeping habits, to smoking habits, the miss became a carbon copy of his highness.

It's fun since it's like raising a little sister, was his highness' statement. I consider it to be sincerely fortunate that his highness Dantalian does not have any relatives. If by any chance, his highness had a child, then the world will end on that day. It was not a joke.

"Miss De Farnese. If his highness decides to do something reckless, then you must not go along with his antics. An outbreak of war will be upon us soon, and the miss will have to grasp military power and discipline his highness' military personnel. What soldiers would trust and follow a general who does drugs from a young age?"

"You are strange. This young lady is a tree so how could she manage soldiers?"

"....."

"Mii-n, mi— minmin—."

She wasn't a tree, but a cicada.

Putting me to the side, his highness and the miss had a conversation.

“Bonjour— bonshouuur—.”

“Minminmii-n.....miiin, mii-im.”

“Mam.....Mama—?”

“Minmin—.”

“Shaba daba do?”

“Miiii-m, miiim.....”

At last, the two had arrived at the creation of their own language. The sight of a new language being born was before me. How marvelous. It was so phenomenal that no words could come from my mouth. Especially since the miss was clinging to my thigh and drooling, it was quite the sight.

Miss De Farnese’ face looked perfectly fine, but the ecology of the inside of her head was simply a mystery.

Her face was void of emotion and there was no tone in her voice. It was difficult to guess her mood. Although I was indeed the same in having no expressions on my face, in my case, I had thrown away my psyche, while she did not have a psyche. Throwing away one’s mind is something done by one’s own volition, so there is still a slight heart remaining there. However, discussing a psyche that never existed in the first place is impossible.

I stared into the miss’ eyes, which were as green as the early summer thickets, for a long period of time.

There was absolutely nothing in the miss’ eyes. In order to understand the other party, one must use the sparsely placed emotions shone within their eyes to cross from this side to theirs. There was not even a single fragment of emotion, which I could use to step on, within the miss’ eyes. I could not see the other side. It felt distant like when closely facing a large blank sheet of paper. What his highness Dantalian discovered in that desolate bottom, what he

planned to fill it with, how he planned to color it, even as his lover, I could not fathom his intentions.

“.....”

A little.

Should I test it out a little?

I examined his highness' movements. His breathing was gentle. He most likely was not going to wake up anytime soon. Turning my gaze away from his highness, I spoke.

“Miss. I have a question. Will you care to answer it?”

“A cicada does not inquire and only responds continuously throughout the summer. A cicada answers when the sunlight of summer falls upon them in question, but this young lady is not certain if it is summer now. Mii-n, mim—.”

“What kind of person was your mother?”

“My mother was a slave.”

Laura De Farnese answered immediately.

“She lived as a slave and gave birth to this young lady after being raped. On the day this young lady was born, my mother was killed. It was a covert murder. There were no records or any keepsakes, so this young lady does not know any more than this.”

The miss tilted her head.

“Did my response properly answer big sister Lapis' question?”

“Yes.”

It was a lie.

The reaction that I wanted was something a bit more intense.

For the sake of dragging out even a handful of subterranean water from that barren well that is her mind, I questioned further.

“Were you perhaps abused because of your mother’s low status?”

“Yes. I was abused a lot.”

“There must have been many minor harassments.”

“Mm.”

“I am curious as to how they harassed you. Would it be fine to ask?”

“Aah. It was trivial. They would give me food that had been spat on, give me water with head lice or flies in them..... Despite that, there were barely any days where I was starved or parched, so I was greatly fortunate.”

“Which mistreatment do you remember the most?”

“.....”

The girl held her breath for a moment.

In that spot where she had stopped breathing, I discovered the gap which I could pry through.

However, I did not rush. No matter what it was, I did not have the habit of being hasty. If one was going to pick a flower from a road, then you must approach it while walking slowly.

“Where do you escape to when you wish to avoid the abuse?”

“The library in an annexed building from the mansion.....”

“The library, is it? I heard that you are fond of history books. The scent from paper books is indeed pleasant. I as well, keep close to me the aroma of books which have not been sullied by the hands of others.”

“This young lady, too, appreciates the smell of a sincerely opened hardcover book.”

“Since the library is in a separate building, the people there must have been sparse. Running away to an area where people rarely approached is an appropriate decision.”

“Mm.”

“But they still came after you, did they not?”

“.....”

“There must have been many times where they simply let you off if you fled, but there were also many days where they did not. If they released you then it would have been fine, but they chased you till the very end. At first to the hallway, and then all the way to your bedroom..... slowly, one step, a single step at a time, they invaded your territory a small portion at a time.”

Her shoulder trembled slightly.

I caught her.

“And finally to the library. They must have promised to not disturb that location. How terrible of them. So was the library invaded as well?”

“.....”

She nodded her head.

Fundamentally, a person’s mentality resembled a fortress. People built a home modeled after themselves and raised a rampart.

In a calm and orderly way.

Similar to how one would siege a fortress in a field of battle.

Cut off their path of retreat, surround their ramparts, tighten the

guard around their castle gates, and finally, after capturing the marginal villages around the castle, is when I will knock on the most important castle.

“How old were you when they first invaded?”

“When I was 10..... in the summer.....”

“I see. It was summer, huh? Was the weather hot?”

“I do not remember.”

“What could you hear?”

“The sound of cicadas.....”

“The sound of the cicadas chirping resonated through the window, I see.”

“That is so. Through the window.....”

“So you kept staring out the window. If one were to stay secluded in a library and read books, then their eyes will often become hazy. You must have frequently gazed at the window in order to release into the air the lines which reverberated in your mind. What could you see in the window?”

“A tree.....”

“What kind of tree?”

“I do not know.”

“Please try to remember. You may not have known what kind of tree it was, but you continued to stare at it. You did your utmost to not turn your gaze away from there. In order to endure the abuse, you looked at the tree. In order to forget it, you enraptured yourself to the sound of the cicadas. You liked the strident cries from the cicadas.”

Everything was arranged.

The entirety had almost fallen.

Finally, the most vital foothold.

The territory which you dislike the most being taken away from you, and the area that I was targeting since the very beginning.

I will break it now.

“Who invaded?”

“.....”

The trembling in her shoulders spread throughout her entire body.

The miss lowered her head. She shook her head as if she was trying to shake away her shudder. That was her final resistance. Honestly, it was laughable.

“It is okay, miss. It is an incident that you have endured long ago and have already overcome. Who was the person that had chased you all the way to the inside of the library?”

“My father, did.”

“.....”

“I closed the door..... I definitely closed the door tight, but because I mistakenly did not lock it with the key.....”

I see.

I thought about the stifling heat of that summer day.

The sight of the scorching heat pressing down on the silence.

“Why did you not lock the door?”

“Since everyone would get mad if I locked it. Just that.....”

“Did it hurt a lot?”

“The cicadas cried a lot.”

I stopped my words.

“They really cried a lot. A long time..... continuously—”

Miss Farnese repeated the same words. There was no tone in her voice so the echoes felt distant.

Perhaps.

This was probably the opportunity.

Lord Dantalian showed affection for this girl before me. Although there was no noticeable carnal desire in his love, since long ago I was vigilant towards love without sexual appetite the most.

Sexual desire is explicit. It goes in the hole that must be gone in, and when it welcomes the path that it must welcome, it reaches satisfaction. It is a desire with a fixed direction. Different types of love went around poking here and there chaotically without any direction, and once it tires of poking, it pesters the other party to teach them the way. In the end, they do not learn how to relieve their desires, but they learn how to withdraw their cravings and endure it, thus resulting in them rotting from the inside out.

Rather, if his highness embraced this girl in front of me.

That thought came up all of a sudden.

The miss will most likely hang by the neck by his highness' love. But what would happen if there was no carnal desire there? She will have no method to respond to his highness' affection. Unable to untangle his highness from her mind, it will continue to pile up and—slowly occupy her mind further.

At one point, her mind will be filled with nothing but his highness. The inability to respond to the other party, she will most likely try to repay with herself. Devote her everything to his highness. I am immensely concerned. If his highness drifted even a slight distance away from this miss, then would she not drag him into the bottom of her heart and try to drown together with his highness?

That was why now was the opportunity to break her.

Before his highness was sufficiently engraved into the miss' heart.

Before she suffocated by his highness' affection.

I will crush her mind completely.

No matter how much the miss' psyche was like that of a white sheet of paper, you cannot write love or any sort of line on scraps of paper which were torn apart into hundreds of thousands of pieces. It was fine. The method of breaking her apart was simple. Words could slice one's heart with more ease than blades.

Like this, all I had to do was whisper words into Miss Farnese's ear and her heart would swallow the blade on its own and tear her mind into shreds.

You are a revolting and trash-like whore who was raped by her father.

—with these words.

Did Miss Farnese become tired after having repeated the same words over and over again? She had fallen onto my leg and gone slack. However, she did not fall asleep yet.

In order for the curse to seep in distinctly, I brought my mouth as

close to the miss' ear as possible. I will welcome your resentment, Laura De Farnese. If the ability to blame another still exists within your mind, that is.

“Lapis. Leave it there.”

“.....”

“I do not know what you are planning to say, but leave it at there.”

His highness' voice pulled me from behind.

I turned my head towards that irrefutable voice. Lord Dantalian was smiling bitterly.

“.....Your highness.”

“She is still a child.”

“She will one day grow into an adult.”

“You are overstepping your boundary.”

Within that slight conversation, we were able to read each other's intentions. We were in a relationship where we have not concealed anything from one another and did not plan to conceal anything in the future as well. I did not obscure my hostility.

“If anything, this is lighter than overstepping a boundary. Was your highness eavesdropping this entire time? This one thought your highness had fallen asleep.”

“I was listening since your ability in handling people is quite adept. Do not forcefully pull out or forcefully tear apart that child's heart. I wish to observe her.”

“Your highness. People's minds are naturally revealed on their own, and the thing which people expose on their own is also, indeed, their mind. If nothing becomes revealed and nothing is exposed, then there is no other choice but to pull it out by force.”

“And so? Now that you have drawn it out, how is it? Are you satisfied?”

“It is dangerous.”

I declared.

“By ruining herself, she has the physiognomy of ruining your highness as well. Because of her bottomless heart, it feels like every person to approach her side will plummet. This one does not desire for your highness to fall.”

I was firmly confident in my ability to discern others.

Up until now, the one and only person that I had misjudged was his highness Dantalian.

Since Lord Dantalian alone had taken both my first mistake and my first love, he was truly an exception among exceptions.

“.....Miss Farnese is unable to sleep even when it becomes night.”

“Pardon?”

“This is an assumption, but she was most likely abused every night. That is why she stays up throughout the night reading. She is abiding the night through books. Until she becomes exhausted to the point where she can no longer turn to the next page, is when she passes out and finally sleeps. During the night where I met her for the first time, Miss Farnese was reading inside of her cell.”

His highness pulled out a pipe and bit down on it. The scent of a burning tobacco leaf spread throughout the bedroom. His highness gazed at the smoke cloud which he made with his own mouth.

“How is it, Lapis? Is it not adorable how desperate that child is?”

“Haa.”

A sigh flowed from my lips.

His highness Dantalian had the habit of treating a serious topic as a joke.

It was a fairly unpleasant mannerism.

“It is not too late to dispose of her.”

“No. She is a child with many uses.”

“Then can your highness toss her away once her uses are gone?”

His highness did not answer. Instead, he smoked his pipe. It appeared as if he was hoping that the smoke from his pipe would express the words that he wished to say.

After a fair amount of time, his highness spoke.

“Since she is a child which I brought back with the intention to espouse, I shall do so.”

“.....”

His highness’ words were distant because they were imperious.

Although this goal of dragging the future, which people could not handle, towards us and cutting that fate into pieces to manage one portion at a time befitted his highness, I worried that his highness may have been burying the fact that there was no end to his words.

.....Your highness. Words are like the drowned, they have the ability to sink people downwards. The word known as love is the strongest among these, so it will drag you down the furthest. That was why we had set down a safety net by telling each other that we loved authority the most back when your highness and this one had confessed our love to each other. In concern of this descent, this fall, and this collapse..... I kept this monologue in the back of my throat.

As his highness would already know regardless of whether I informed him or not, I was wary towards lightly pronouncing the

word known as love, thoughtlessly.

If that was so then.

“.....This one will join as well.”

I wonder if my words came as a surprise, his highness' eyes grew wide.

“What? Join what?”

“This one heard that the miss' mother died early, so the miss should not feel too awkward if this one were to fill that empty spot.”

“Wait. Through what method.....?”

“Please console the miss' mind properly, your highness. This one will straighten the miss' body. How to not lower one's head, how to not stutter one's words, how to not dishevel one's facial expressions, how to not slouch one's back, and how to not ruin one's gait. This one will educate her in these arts. Since she is a child from a refined birth, if she masters these techniques she will become marvelous.”

“But I was planning to teach her all that myself.....”

“Since your highness was born with a fully controlled body, your highness' gestures do not match the people below you. This one is a peasant, and half of the miss is a peasant as well. The miss is a human, and half of this one is human as well. This one's mannerism will most likely fit Miss Farnese more than your highness' body movements. Please make the miss learn discipline as a vassal instead of the methods of a king.”

“Lapis, wouldn't it be tiresome?”

His highness asked worriedly. A soft consideration was spread across his face. His way of speech had also come undone and turned into a normal tone. It was the expression and tone that his highness would occasionally whisper to me with after sharing intimacy.

It was a bit sly.

If I were to hear a voice like that, then even I would have trouble refusing.

Therefore, I decided to be sly as well.

“Yes. Incredibly tiresome.”

“Euuk.....!”

“Speaking honestly, it is absurd. This one is busy just preparing a stratagem for war, but to have to worry about childcare as well? How preposterous. It is a question whether your highness lives with any thought at all.”

“Euh, uuuuuh.....”

“That is why, could your highness grant this one a favor?”

Lord Dantalian wore a tearful face.

This was what it meant to knowingly suffer.

“I-If it’s a wish that I am capable of.”

“Do not unburden only the miss’ heart, but give her your body as well. Stroke her head often and take care of her regularly. If the mind and body are unable to keep up with one another, then this one fears the situation of the miss’ mind wasting away in her body, and her body being thrown away within her mind.”

His highness let out a long groan.

“Are you perhaps saying that if Miss Farnese were to request for my body, then I should present it to her?”

“That is so.”

“Lapis, you alone are enough for me.”

“It will not be excessive even with several people.”

“Children who are less developed like the miss are really not my type, and her chest is small as well.”

“This one apologizes, but if the person who is besotted with her highness Barbatos is to say that, then the credibility.....”

“That is not me being besotted! That is Barbatos having eaten me! The power relation is completely on that side!”

“That may have been so at first, but that is no longer true after the fact, is it not? Please collect your words, your highness. It is embarrassing to hear your highness continue to make excuses.”

“Wait. Barbatos is a vitally crucial tool in executing our plan, is she not? If that is so, since she has an extensive use instrumentally, caring about making myself agreeable to her as she desires is.....”

“Yes. Since your highness brought the miss since she has her extensive uses as well, then your highness can put that same care to her as well.”

Lord Dantalian put his hand against his forehead. Sorrily, his highness has rarely ever won in an argument against me. That was because I only fought when I knew I could win.

Needless to say, I loved as if I was fighting a war. Be it a relationship or a war, it was a rule to fight only after one has ascertained their victory. You were careless, your highness.

“.....If. If I’m the father and Lapis is the mother, then that would mean that Miss Farnese is our child. There is no law against a parent and a child connecting, right?”

“She is not your real daughter anyway, so why does it matter?”

“Right. That’s right, isn’t it.....”

His highness shrunk down. His final resistance was trampled with ease and a white flag rose from the inside of his fortress. After seeing my face which had become refreshed from having acquired a sound victory, for some reason, the corners of his highness' lips twisted.

“Lapis. A daughter has abruptly formed between us, has it not?”

“.....That is so.”

I was apprehensive.

Every time his highness made that kind of expression, an absurd event would always occur.

“Since a daughter cannot be made without intercourse, it seems the two of us have to share intimacy right this instant.”

“.....This one apologizes, but just now, was the order not reversed a bit?”

“I shall not listen to objections.”

His highness lifted me up abruptly and sat down on a chair.

While childishly shouting ‘yah!’ like some mischievous child, his highness embraced my body.

He was truly an unreasonable person.

“Your highness, the conference will be held in an hour.”

“If you are disappointed, then there is also the flavor of ending it with that lacking sensation.”

“Is the miss not sleeping? This one is worried that she will awaken by the noise.”

“Doing one’s best to not get caught is also a charm. Ah, do not remove your socks. I oddly prefer it more when doing it while you still have those on.”

This was wrong.

“This one will say it again, but the order is wrong. A daughter is made after copulation, so why would one copulate after the daughter has already been made?”

“Oho, order, is it? Lapis, did you not know till now? This is a country of smoke where everything is backwards. People speak in reverse, words are pronounced backwards, and thus, human relations are flipped upside down as well.”

His highness placed his head against my chest and grinned.

“Repeat after me. uo-y, ev-ol, i.”

“uo-y, ev-ol-i?”

It was a gibberish line.

“What does it mean?”

“Now say that backwards. Then you will know.”

“uoy.....”

I tried flipping each word around and pronounced it in my mouth. That was why if you ordered ‘uo-y, ev-ol, i’ in reverse.

i, lo-ve, y-ou.

.....Therefore.

I love you.

.....

I was dumbfounded.

To think that he would make such a childish joke.

A little girl, selling flowers for the first time on the streets, would most likely snort at such a play.

While receiving the entirety of my cold gaze, his highness whispered into my ear.

“We are going to bring upon a war from now on. A war where everything will be turned upside down. Cause and effect will be reversed, voices will be entangled, and people will be twisted. Nobles will become peasants, and peasants will become nobles. In that world, Lapis, you and I together will rise to the pinnacle.”

“.....”

“However, our love will not change. Even if the order of our love were to be reversed, it would still be love.”

Could you believe this?

All of this was an excuse given by his highness just to **sleep with me once**.

Amazing, your highness. How marvelous.

A great individual who would flip the entire world over in order to have sexual relations with a single mixed blood shallow-minded succubus, no matter how longstanding the history of the continent was, most likely solely Lord Dantalian alone existed as such an individual.

Of course, separate from that, I did not feel impressed at all.

“.....Does your highness not feel shame to say such words so boldly?”

“Shame? I threw that sort of emotion away into a trash bin long

ago.”

“Please go retrieve your highness’ personality back from that trash bin.”

“Geez. Even though you like it on the inside, Lapis. You’re trying to play it off.”

Dear lord.

I was speechless.

If a brazen-faced person was intelligent, then how dreadfully narcissistic of an individual they would become, I could understand by looking at Lord Dantalian.

In order for his highness to regain his senses, he would have to meet an individual as preposterous as himself.

This was where the problem lay. The world was already handling Lord Dantalian. With that alone, the world has already run out of any surplus space. For two people, who are similar to Lord Dantalian, to exist. Just this hypothesis was enough to violate the laws of nature.

“Haa.....”

While abandoning my resistance and calculating what I had to do in order to most efficiently and quickly squeeze out Lord Dantalian, I covered his highness’ eyes with my hand. If we were to not be late for the meeting, then there was a need to rush. But that was fine. Despite my appearance, half of my blood was that of a succubus.

I am an expert.





The conference had arrived at its final stage.

Although Paimon continued to elucidate the prohibition of war, there was a clear lack of strength in her voice. Paimon as well most likely understood how the conclusion of the gathering was going to end. His highness did not go out of his way to prevent Paimon's voice. He merely observed Paimon with empty eyes that appeared as if they were marveling a single piece of art.

.....People's minds are naturally revealed on their own, and the thing which people exposed on their own was also, indeed, their mind. However, the mind that appeared from his highness and the mind which his highness revealed was peculiar so it was occasionally difficult for myself to grasp his meaning.

Lazily sleeping in and doing drugs throughout the night was also his highness. Cunningly embellishing war was also, indeed, his highness. Slyness secretly seeped into laziness, and laziness boldly resided within slyness. Whenever I looked at his highness, a single spider—I am reminded of a poisonous spider laying its body on spiderweb and sleeping leisurely. The entire world was like a web to his highness, therefore, his highness resting peacefully meant that he was hunting.

“.....?”

His highness suddenly turned towards my direction. Since I was perceived as a peasant, I was unable to approach the center of the conference room. I could only view the meeting from a distance. To that me, his highness moved his lips. There was no sound.

What sort of play could that be?

That was an insulting behavior towards the sacred Walpurgis Night. It was inexcusable. A slight headache came to me.

Through lipreading, I read each word that came from Lord Dantalian's lips that were not pronounced.

nia-ga, em, rof, lla-f, uo-y, did..... gniza-ma, ton, I, ma?

It did not establish a sentence at all.

It was neither Habsburgian nor Franconian. From what language that was from, I could not.....no. Wait a moment. His highness was the type of person to use the same joke daily. If I were to read it backwards like I did earlier, then it may make sense. 'nia-ga, em, rof, lla-f, uo-y, did, gniza-ma, ton, I, ma', if I were to read this in reverse, then—.

Am I not amazing? Did you fall for me again?

.....

While experiencing my gaze turning thin like a rotten fish in real time, I moved my lips.

Please kill yourself immediately.

The jokes continued on until the break of day. At 4 o'clock in the morning was when the Demon Lords finally voted on whether they were going to go to war or not. This was the exact result.

Total participants in the meeting, 63 people.

Yes for war, 38 votes.

No for war, 21 votes.

Abstained, 4 people.

Since the approval votes were more than half the amount of total participants, the war was determined. Everything was flowing towards the direction which Lord Dantalian desired. Rank 1st Demon Lord Baal, rank 2nd Agares, and rank 3rd Vassago did not partake in this gathering, so this decision of war could be considered to have been handled with more haste than caution, but—

What was the problem?

There was no flaw according to the law.

We could now **conduct war legitimately**. If we were to speculate that the function of war was to kill humans, then just now, through the conference a second ago, we were presented the rights to murder the humans legitimately. The legal and illegal boundary drawn on death, which was made due to people being unsatisfied after being concerned with the legal and illegal laws on life, was laughable. It was the funniest joke that I have heard all year. Surely his highness Dantalian was bursting out in laughter on the inside.

— When should we teach the humans a lesson?

— It should be sufficient to start moving when the cold lessens a bit around the 3rd month.

— Once we pillage them a fair amount, the humans will be shocked and lower their bodies on their own. I shall call together a race meeting and inform the youngsters.

— It's been a long time since I got a warm up.

The complexions of the Demon Lords were light.

It was clear. No one here was interpreting this resolution of war on a full-scale. They were looking at it as a simple war to plunder. And this was referring to just the Plains Faction. The Mountain Factions had taken this as a small skirmish within diplomatic affairs. They were seriously discussing the topic of sending an envoy to both the empire and kingdom to reprimand the humans of their wickedness. It was a comedy.

How easily they spat out words.

How fatal it was for an individual to decide on a war, where people killed and were killed by others, with mere words.

These people will have to shoulder that responsibility on their own.

Among the Demon Lords, only Paimon had a dark complexion until the very end. After seeing the results of the vote, Paimon lamented for a long period of time. She cleared her throat. The warning that she left behind remained in the ceiling and echoed throughout.

— When this war started and where it came from, we do not know this. Since we do not know when the war had started, we will not know when to end it. Since we do not know where the war had come from, we will not know where to go in order to end it. Everyone, do you not feel dizzy? This lady feels light-headed. It should not be possible to contain the weight of lives with the lightness of words, and yet this lady worries for that one thing. That our soldiers will have to endure that heaviness because of our frivolousness.....

After deciding to gather at the Plains of Jatvingians^[3] on the 2nd

month and 15th day to advance together, the meeting was over.

□ Weakest Demon Lord, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1505, Month 12, Day 7
Niflheim, Governor's Palace

The conference had dispersed.

I waited for everyone to make their way out.

While staring up at the dark ceiling, I dwelled on the words Paimon left behind. Paimon's lamentation of not knowing where it had come from and not knowing where it would go, was honestly magnificent. While the other Demon Lords were trying to make their way through the cloud of smoke which Barbatos and I had spread out, Paimon was concerned about where the smoke had come from. It was only her. The sole person to have tried to look past the smoke.

The meeting room was empty. The servants blew out the candles. It felt like I was by myself in the backstage of a performance hall where the actors had left and the audience had departed.

— I'm sorry..... I'm sorry.....

Now that I think about it.

Even back during the time she had collapsed after receiving my retaliation in this room, Paimon apologized exceedingly sincerely. The rank 9th woman apologized with tears to the rank 71st me. I suddenly feared her lucidity that could apologize sincerely and lament honestly. Paimon will most likely not make the same mistake twice.

Crossing through the empty conference room, Lapis came to my

side. She then asked.

“What is your highness doing?”

“I am concerned about whether if I will have to have a single individual assassinated.”

“It will not be easy.”

Lapis responded calmly. There were no signs of her being surprised by my words. She did not even ask who the person I was considering to assassinate was. I knew that Lapis was contemplating the exact same thing as myself in her mind.

“Sitri is always by that person’s side.”

“Sitri?”

“The rank 12th Demon Lord. If one were to rank them by personal strength, then rank 2nd Agares is at the highest, rank 8th Barbatos is second, and after that is Sitri at third. Since she follows that person like an elder sister and does not leave their side for even a moment, it will be difficult for an assassin to get through.”

“Aah.”

I recalled the event from the past. The time Paimon had fallen after receiving my counterattack, there was a female Demon Lord who supported her and left. I could not see her face, but she must have been Sitri.

I then remembered Torukel. The old goblin merchant Torukel. Looking back at it, did that merchant not commit suicide in order to protect Paimon as well? I let out a long groan.

“Is that so. Paimon is blessed with people, I see. Her loyal subjects protect her by forming the rampart, so it would be difficult to break through from the outside. Since she is an individual who worries for even the campfire lit by the privates, it would be a cluster.”

“Will you leave it be?”

“I cannot see the means yet. Loyalty does not form by itself. They are loyal to Paimon because she is able to fill the thing that they are unable to fill themselves. I must first find out what Paimon is providing them.....”

Lapis lowered herself to one knee. She gently leaned her head against my thigh. In the center of the empty conference room, we silently felt each other's silence.

Suddenly having a craving for contact, I pressed my lips against Lapis'. No matter how you looked at it, one hour was not enough. I wanted to fill the lacking sensation that was left from before the conference started now that the meeting was over. Lapis let out a breath.

“Your highness. This is a sacred place.....”

“Does that not make it better?”

This was a sacred location which only Demon Lords attended and Lapis Lazuli was a peasant. By my cruel joke of suggesting to dirty the most divine area with the defamatory of a peasant, Lapis shut her mouth. We were accomplices. Lovers who were wounded by the world brought those scars and shared it with one another, but there was no need for that for lovers who were trying to damage the world. Within the gaps of our intertwined flesh, the sound of breathing dug in deeply.

—.....

—.....

We rubbed our skin together as long as possible and overlapped one

another's flesh as widely as possible. We also held back our sound as much as possible. When the gasps of either her or myself would leak out at times, the sound reached as high as the ceiling. Throughout the night a blizzard raged on outside the window. It felt like the snow was covering the cracked fields that were especially arid. The wounds of the earth will be buried under the snow.

At dawn, the sound of snow had ceased in the world.

Translator's Notes

1. [\[↑\] The Five Ws.](#)
2. [\[↑\] It's So Good \(Wikipedia, YouTube\)](#)
3. [\[↑\] Changed Jötunheimr to Jatvingians.](#)

Chapter Two

Winter

“Try calling me father.”

“Are you insane, Lord?”

I organized my army throughout the winter.

The tempers of the soldiers were fierce and violent. They couldn't stand the sight of a 16-year-old broad pretending to be a general. Whenever I glared at them, the soldiers would quickly move to obey, but it was for that moment only. In areas with no watching eyes, the military personnel criticized Miss Farnese. Thanks to the witches having spread their familiars around, we were able to vividly listen in on the soldiers talking behind our backs.

“Listen well.”

Having recorded their words onto a Memory Play artifact, I allowed Farnese to listen to it in full. The soldiers referred to Miss Farnese as ‘human harlot’.

— We're demons, but why is some human harlot crawling here and saying she's going to command us? What kind of fresh bullshit is this?

— It's raw bullshit. That's what it is.

— But that young broad's appearance is nice.

— Who goes to war to look at someone's face? We fight to take the necks with those faces attached to 'em. Even if that human harlot memorized a couple of lines from an art of war manual, I doubt even small-fry officials would be intimidated by her after hearing that she read some books.

— Who knows? All of our heads might go down after being pushed

down by her hips and hearing her moan.

The privates laughed loudly. We could also hear the objurgatory nagging from someone on the side telling them that trying to score a broad, one that his highness Demon Lord had already had his way with, was a dangerous action. However, it was not said in a way of speech where they were reproaching them seriously. It was said in a joking tone surrounded by jest. Listening up to that point, I closed the artifact.

“What do you think?”

“It seems the soldiers are recklessly saying whatever they want while not knowing anything about this young lady.”

Farnese muttered with an emotionless face.

“This young lady has never shared a bed with your lordship. What troublesome people.”

“Hey.”

That part wasn't the issue.

A little bit more, how do you say it? Is there not a more important problem lying dormant? If I were to point it out in more detail, then there's the fact that your military command is not receiving even a seedling of respect. Despite having heard my comment, Farnese's face was still devoid of emotion. She did not even turn her gaze towards me, but instead, silently continued to read her history book. While reading her book, Farnese muttered.

“It is not possible to take apart and fix a problem within an army with ease. Them being unable to simply accept an outsider, in other words, means that they are already firmly tied together on the inside. Since they are sturdy on the inside, they will not lightly fall apart when facing the enemy. They are elites.”

“And so?”

“If this young lady were to slit the throats of the centurions and decani, then the sturdy army will fall apart from the inside and descend into being a mere crowd. The captains who cursed at this young lady would be cut down, and their positions will be filled by fellows who are good at flattering this young lady. Instead of captains with ability, captains who are good at bootlicking will end up receiving preferential treatment, and that is not correct. An army is a body of people that is essentially tied together by both the inner and outer workings. This young lady fears the foolishness of remodeling the outer layer only to have the inner layer deteriorate.”

I carefully examined Farnese’s complexion.

Despite having heard the vulgar words spat out by the lowly privates, there were no signs of her showing any resistance towards it. The only thing that was there was the sight of her contemplating what she was going to have to do in order to properly manage the privates while treating them not as people, but as tools.

Laura De Farnese was a psychopath.

Nevertheless, she was a clever psychopath.

“Would it be permissible to leave all of the military commands to you?”

“Did your lordship not retrieve this young lady from the slave market in order to let her reign over your troops? It is fine for your lordship to not worry. Military affairs are this young lady’s task. Since it is an issue confronting this young lady, this young lady shall manage it herself.”

I knew that my concern was unnecessary.

With the intention of finishing this conversation with a test, I reprimanded her.

“Would military affairs be managed just because someone like you says they can handle it?”

“Your lordship’s words are rather aggressive. Instead of using words to instill fear into this young lady, use a goal to light a path for her.”

“I shall give you one month. Within 30 days, have control of the military discipline. If you are unable to uphold the big talk you have just now made, then I shall lash you for the crime of thoughtlessly flapping your mouth.”

“Understood.”

Farnese still did not remove her gaze from her book. Since I had harshly opened the path in front of her, it was time to softly support the path behind her. I asked her allusively.

“Is there nothing I can help with?”

“Please assign the witches’ familiars to this young lady. This young lady shall use the familiars as her eyes and ears, and utilize them to examine the things which this young lady cannot see or hear.”

“An easy request.”

“Ah, also—.”

Farnese spoke.

“Why did your lordship say that you would become this lady’s father?”

“The privates are disregarding you because you are a child of a human. I figured that the contempt towards you would lessen if I were to adopt you as my daughter.”

Farnese collected her gaze from her book. She was finally looking towards my direction, but for some reason, her eyes were full of

suspicion. It almost felt like she was treating me as food waste.

“That is quite indecent. Those words may not be wrong, but your lordship’s way of thought is pitiable. In the entire world, what lord would try to solve a military affair through adoption? Although this young lady has felt it before, but your lordship is a bit insane. You are at least not normal.”

Why do you care!?

You’re the psychopath!



Farnese submerged herself into the inner layer of military affairs. Farnese laid down her bedding at the side of the quarters where the soldiers rested and played. The general resided wearing the uniform worn by privates, a single set of a mat and blanket, and a poor quality bowl. She was planning to live alongside the troops.

The captains flocked to me and complained.

— It is uncomfortable since the general had abruptly entered our area.

— Since the general is nearby, even when we’re receiving breakfast with our bowls, before we can get our portion of soup we end up glancing at the general once. While peeking at the general, we end up chewing the meat in our soup one less time. Since we are frequently being mindful of the general, we often forget to chew, therefore, we have no energy after our meals and easily have upset stomachs. They say that people shouldn’t bother even a village mutt when it’s eating,

but how are we expected to fight properly when the general is interfering with the meals of the subordinates? Please understand.

— Please understand, your highness.

I scratched my forehead.

I see these bastards are small-mindedly throwing a fit over their meal. They are sullying my name. Since you guys are rattling on like goats, I shall behave narrow-mindedly as well. Let us see how you bastards cope with my angered performance.

Taking a deep breath, I unloaded words like a round of bullets.

“Are you all discussing domiciliary before the king? So be it then. I shall inform you all of your domestics. All of the food which you all shove into your faces every morning comes from me. The dinner you all stuff inside yourselves and the shit that comes out of your bodies, all of that comes from me. When your swords are broken, who will you go to in order to request for them to be fixed? Who will seek for the blacksmith? Who will obtain the horse and wagon to load the weapons onto and send to the blacksmith, and who will provide the food and accommodations for the coachmen who will be traveling back and forth? I am the household manager. You ungrateful fellows. I am telling you that I am your monarch. Just because you feel slightly uncomfortable by the fact that you have to be a bit more mindful and chew a bit less, you came all the way to my premises to make a fuss?”

I grabbed the wooden pillow which I was using for my nap and threw it at the captains. Once the wooden pillow hit the floor and bounced, the captains’ spines shivered. The captains lowered their heads further.

The mannerism of speech I used when handling Demon Lords and the tone I used when dealing with military captains were distinctly different. I did not allow them to run far away by needlessly behaving

high and mighty in front of the captains . Instead, I lowered myself to their level and made them sink their heads while being unable to move an inch. That was my stratagem.

“These ignorant fools.”

— Your words are immeasurable, your highness!

— We are to blame, your lordship!

— Our thoughts were short.

“Good. Seeing that you all are able to apologize with such ease, I will not make you repent deeply. Laura De Farnese is the general giving military commands in my stead, she is the acting general. Wherever I am not, she is your monarch. The reason why I am not punishing you all right this instant is not because I have accepted your apology, but because I want you all to go to the acting general and finish your apology. A mistake which occurs within the army must be forgiven by the general.”

— But, your highness.

— We fight with the strength given to us by our food. If we are unable to eat our meals properly, then.

— We do not mean that, but.

These fuckers?

I drew a sword.

“Should I personally assist in making your meals go down your throats with more ease?”

At that moment was when the captains finally fled. Since their steps felt more feeble than refreshing, I chased after them. The captains were surprised and let out a scream. I picked up the wooden pillow and tossed it once more, and since I was gifted as a pitcher, the wooden pillow hit the exact center of the back of a captain’s head. The captains escaped. And like so, I covered for Farnese.

I trusted Laura De Farnese who was destined to be the greatest commander in the continent like in the original history.

Sure enough, after 4 days, Farnese figured out the problem within the army. While wearing the military uniform meant for privates, Farnese came to inform me.

“The irrationality within the troops is immense, lord.”

“What kind of irrationality?”

“If there is a regimental commander, a centurion, and a decanus, then that is sufficient. Despite that, the regimental commanders give their duties to the centurions, the centurions give their duties to the decani, and the decani give their duties to the privates. In the end, the privates take care of everything within the army. Even the privates, having become tired of this, distinguish the high and low among themselves. The low privates then spread the bedding for the higher privates and do their laundry.”

“An issue that is prominent in any military.”

“Privates should fight like privates and centurions should fight like centurions, and yet, why are they ordering around others just for the sake of making their own lives easier? This young lady, who is the general, should be the one commanding the privates, but since there are so many superiors who are making the privates do things, it is as if they have several generals at the same time. There is no chance military command would be able to gather together as one and

pervade deeply within an army of this sort.”

I spat on the floor. My throat often felt parched because it was winter.

“Can you solve it?”

“This young lady shall crush it with ease.”

I preferred to leave irrationality as it was and manipulate it appropriately, but it seems Laura De Farnese was the complete opposite. Enduring irrationality or bearing with her alone, I considered which side would be more convenient.

“Very well then. Perform as you wish.”

“This young lady shall perform for your lordship’s goal.”

Farnese started to handle the military discipline more severely.

From this point on, be it captain, veteran, or newcomer, regardless of one’s rank or experience, Farnese established a rule where everyone must manage their own livelihood by themselves. She stepped forward on her own. Farnese washed her uniform by herself and personally cleaned her own military boots. One day, when a private brought her meal for her, Farnese told him off in a loud voice.

“Put that away. Do I not have my own arms and mouth?”

Farnese did not eat at all on that day. Once the commander cast away the bowl, the soldiers did not know what to do. From that day on, the sight of privates presenting meals for the veteran soldiers disappeared.

However, at this point, it had only vanished on the outside.

Something that dissipated on the outside was bound to hide deeply on the inside.

During an ambitious night, the veteran soldiers secretly gathered the privates and abused them. Using the familiars, we were able to listen in on this sound of violence flowing from the corner of the encampment in real-time.

— Hey, get your heads straight you bastards. You think that human harlot is going to live in our quarters forever? She's the type of bitch to leave in half a month. Once she does, you guys will die by my hands.

— Think carefully about who is truly taking care of you guys. That human harlot is someone like his highness and not people like us. I'll give you an honest advice, stay in line.

— Yes, we understand!

Be it here or there, the repertoire is quite the same—.

While I was turning my ear towards the audio and receiving a feeling of longing, Farnese muttered beside me.

“.....I see they are challenging me to see who will win.”

Oh?

It may have been just my imagination, but that appeared like a slightly angered face. Since it was rather rare for Farnese to show any emotion, it was intriguing.

Since that day, Farnese began to go on night patrols.

She did not wander around openly but feigned it as a coincidence whenever possible. For example, pretending to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night and swooping in on violence that was occurring in a warehouse, or pretending to wake up because of a

presence and examining the backside of the quarters. It was an obvious trick. Of course, there was no tactic that worked as efficiently as an obvious trick. Think about it. It's the commander appearing out of nowhere from the darkness. The privates could only be frightened.

“What are you all doing?”

The senior officers who were mistreating the privates could not respond.

With an emotionless face, Farnese announced.

“I see. People who do not sleep when required to sleep must fight quite well when required to fight. I am relieved that you all form a strong army as one. The senior officers over there, follow me.”

Farnese made the senior soldiers do manual labor. Giving them each a pickaxe, she ordered them to dig. Since the earth had hardened due to the cold, the ends of the pickaxe were unable to pierce the ground. Looking at the impenetrable dirt, the soldiers made a fire in order to melt the ground. After lighting the fire, they dug down until a low mound was piled up in the barracks. Farnese looked down at the soldiers and gave another order.

“Well done. Now fill it back up.”

The officers poured the dirt, which they had dug up in vain, back into the pit. It took a whole 4 hours to dig and refill the hole. The ground had returned to being flat. Towards the veteran officers who thought their work was finally over and were wiping away their sweat, Farnese spoke coolly.

“Dig again.”

The faces of the veteran officers turned blue. For half a day, the soldiers repetitively dug and filled in holes. It was labor with no reason or goal. Since there was no goal, the end could not be seen, and since the end could not be seen, they could not endure the current situation. They most likely wanted to die. It must have felt like they

were digging up their own graves. While keeping my hands behind my back and standing afar, I watched Farnese cheerfully torment the veteran soldiers. Speaking truthfully, it was pleasant.

— Please kill me instead.

— Us humble ones have made a mistake, general!

The officers lowered their heads to the ground and bowed. This must have been the first time that Farnese was referred to as general by the soldiers. Farnese, with an expression as transparent as water, looked down at the soldiers.

“Why would I end your lives? No one cherishes you all as much as I do. Stop your chatter and continue digging.”

Farnese raised the edges of her mouth. Since she was still not used to making facial expressions, Farnese’s mouth twisted very strangely. That was more terrifying.

“Or do you perhaps want me to give you the hole on myself? Do all of you think you could satisfy me with those limp dicks of yours?”

The soldiers wailed out.

After that day.

The miss rose from being a normal harlot to being a wicked harlot.

In the past, the sound of voices saying ‘that harlot!’ in a ridiculing tone rose high into the air, but now, the voices uttered ‘that wicked harlot.....’ in a vexed tone and sunk down low. Sounds that resonated high dissipated quickly, while the sounds that permeated low spread out wide.

A joyous occasion this was, quite joyous.

The captains came running to me once more. Different to before, their tone was greatly intense. An acute urgency could be felt. All of the captains now referred to Farnese as Miss General. It may have only been the single word 'Miss' being attached to 'General', but there was overall a lot of meaning there. For example, a meaning on the level of 'that crazy bitch' was inclined there. Was this not impressive progress?

— Since Miss General interferes with the soldiers not only during the afternoon but during the night as well, the youngsters are unable to sleep properly. Even if we lack energy after our meals, we can still fight with that emptiness. However, how are people to fight without sleep?

— This does not come from an art of war manual, but from life itself. People should read books based on life, but if someone were to live their life based on books, then would the world not be upside down? Even if Miss General's knowledge is profound and she were to have read every book related to tactics in the nation, life is a separate matter. Lowly people like us live in life and have no other choice but to continue living in life. Please understand!

I motionlessly listened to the words coming from the captains. After hearing everything, I went to the warehouse and brought a pickaxe. It was the same pickaxe the senior officers had swung until they collapsed from exhaustion. I then spoke.

“I see your words are quite profound so they pierce an exquisite principle. Let us test how deep your bodies can be buried in the ground.”

The captains fled.

The month after, irrationality was completely suppressed within the troops. The custom of the centurions taking the wages of the decani,

and the decani taking the wages of the privates disappeared. The tendency of loaning the money they've taken from others, and conspiring with outside peddlers and panders to sell items for an exorbitant price, also vanished.

Farnese was a vicious girl. The more that this fact spread out among the troops, in contrast, made the sounds of soldiers pointing towards her and calling her a wicked harlot shrink down. At one point, instead of a wicked harlot, the voices of people praising her as a general who thought of the privates before others, flowed throughout the army. This was most likely around the time that the 11th pit was created in the barracks.

The captains reacted sensitively towards the mood of the privates. Like how humans would automatically perceive the smell of flatulence, the captains understood the privates' temper.

The captains read the atmosphere and obeyed the commander. They must have been afraid of the consequences for coming to me to complain unreasonably since the captains went around cheering 'Hooray for Miss General Farnese!'. Captains that behaved as if they would lick the soles of Farnese's feet crawled around. Among them, one fellow actually did try to put saliva on Farnese's toes and was kicked.

Tsk tsk.

What adorable fellows.

Finally, the remnant group of individuals known as decani and senior officers remained.

These people were unable to throw away the pleasure of extorting money from the people below them. They were better than the privates but lower than the captains, so they were fellows similar to that of neighborhood thugs. These people lacked the political capability to react appropriately to the state of affairs like the captains had done. The senior officers tried to protect their authority and territory.

When the senior officers mistreated the privates, they went far. They dragged the privates out to one of the most remote warehouses in the encampment. A mouse, that was the familiar of a witch, eavesdropped on the voices leaking from the gaps on the wall.

— Hey, bastards. Who's the one that brought you bums from the village and enlisted you to the army? I'm the older guy that lived next door. You guys were born in the village first and not in the army, right? Then you guys should treat your seniors from the same village with respect!

— We may live in the unit right now, but when we die, we'll do so back home. If you guys keep ignoring your seniors, then do you think a single mourner will show up to your funeral? Do you think that wicked harlot will go out of her way to arrange your funerals? She's the bitch who'll order you to die, not a bitch who'll take care of you after you've died.

— Hey, don't ignore us. We're all saying this in consideration of you guys. Besides, no matter how much you scream here, that harlot won't come.

Farnese threw open the door.

“Yes. I am here because you called.”

The soldiers screamed and fell to the floor. I could hear the sound of materials collapsing clamorously with a crash. I asked Farnese later on, but apparently, the soldiers were gazing up at her as if she was a ghost.

“It is fine to look forward to it, gentlemen. Let us dig holes properly today.”

The senior officers were forced to unearth dirt for 2 days straight

without sleep.

At last, military discipline stood upright. The soldiers took care of their own domestics by themselves. If it wasn't an official order from above, even the privates did not obey them thoughtlessly.

On the final day of the promised 1 month, Laura De Farnese discarded the uniform meant for privates and donned the military uniform for commanders. After washing herself, Farnese came to visit me with a clean body. Farnese's skin was whiter than the snow that had just fallen onto the earth, and her voice was as clear as the sky which the snow had fallen from. I was not unaware of her intention to appear like the snow and sky while before me. Regardless of whether she knew that I understood her feelings or not, the small troublemaking psychopathic girl said shortly.

“This young lady hereupon reports, that she has achieved your lordship's goal. ”

So much self-pride and smugness could be understood by that shortness of words.

I wanted to compliment this girl. I wanted to acknowledge the hard work she had gone through by staying up throughout the night chasing after senior officers, consoling the new recruits, and doing all of her laundries with her own two hands. I gestured for Farnese to approach and softly brushed the hair of Farnese who had drawn near with an ivory comb.

I smiled.

“Well done. Would you like a drink?”



Farnese did not try to gain adoration from her troops. Farnese desired for every individual soldier to fear her. Instead of the courage to rush at the enemy, Farnese highly regarded the dread the soldiers would feel by disobeying the supreme commander. This was, indeed, different compared to me. Unknowledgeable on the method of obtaining fear, Farnese came and asked me.

“What should this young lady do to make the soldiers fear her, lord?”

“Well. You do have a rather pretty appearance, so that may be difficult.”

“Would they be afraid if there was an unseemly scar on this young lady’s face?”

“Damn it, this ignorant child. How could you think so one-dimensionally? Think a bit more respectably.”

“Only your lordship and Miss Lazuli are the ones to call this young lady ignorant.....”

Farnese became sullen. As of late, Farnese had been receiving education from both myself and Lapis. Compared to me, Lapis taught her much more harshly. It was obvious that this small room girl, who lived her life believing that she was a genius, would be low-spirited if she were to be ill-treated frequently. Feeling some sympathy, I spoke indirectly.

“Should I inform you of a good trick?”

The next day.

Farnese purchased 15 hunting dogs. The waists of the hunting dogs were slim so they appeared scrawny, but the color of their fur was marvelous. They were a breed commonly raised by imperial families and royal families, so they were remarkably expensive. The dogs did

not leave their master's side even for a second.

— I see Miss General adores dogs.

— Raising hunting dogs is a good hobby. They can smell the scent of the enemy and pursue them, so it'll be convenient for us too.

The soldiers gathered in small groups and chewed on dried meat. Though they tossed some of their dried meat for fun, the hunting dogs did not turn their gaze towards it at all.

Farnese personally acquired food and fed the dogs herself. The dog food looked more luxurious than the food people ate. Some privates joked that Miss General fed the mutts better than them and chuckled. After seeing the sight of Farnese providing a sumptuous meal for the beasts, some people claimed that they were delighted since she finally appeared like a young girl, while others were worried that the commander's selfish interest would disturb the military order. With half delight and half worry, the soldiers stared at the luxurious dog food with envy.

The time for my army to go to war had arrived. The troops, who had warm sleep and ate till their stomachs were full, had clear eyes despite the winter season. 3,500 dwarf infantrymen, 500 centaur cavalry, and 50 witches hired from the city were standing on the winter field, waiting for the general's speech before our departure. There were people gathered around the outskirts of the field, but they were all peddlers and prostitutes. These types of people lived with busy feet by constantly following behind anywhere armies went.

“.....”

While holding a formal-dress sword, Farnese went up onto the platform. There was no decoration so the blade was small. Since the appearance of the weapon was light, it well suited the miss' body

figure. The hunting dogs followed their master all the way up the platform. The dogs then silently stationed themselves around her.

Farnese unsheathed her blade. Hearing the sound of metal, the hunting dogs looked behind them. The clear-blue sword slit the long neck of a dog. Blood burst out. The other dogs did not react at all. Farnese killed all 15 hunting dogs, and until the very end, not a single one barked. Blood soundlessly flowed down from the platform.

—.....



The soldiers all held their breaths. They did not dare meet the commander's gaze.

People would fear the general who had mercilessly slaughtered the hunting dogs which she had raised so preciously, they would fear the silent general whose face was expressionless during the entire slaughter, and they would also fear the fact that that sort of general was merely a 16-year-old girl. They would especially dread the intentions behind the general who had gone out of her way to slaughter her pets, which she had treated with care, on the day the army was departing. While glancing at the decapitated heads of the dogs rolling around, the captains rubbed their own necks.

Laura De Farnese spoke.

“Advance.”

The troops obeyed.



Farnese turned the dead hunting dogs into dried meat. It was a week's distance from here to the location where the other Demon Lords planned to gather their armies. For one week, Farnese chewed on the jerky made of dog meat and drove away soldiers with her gaze.

On one of the days, a river was not entirely frozen so we had set up camp at a ferry service to rest. There was a small village located next to the ferry service. I issued a military command and forbade them from pillaging.

Around the afternoon, three soldiers were caught. They were criminals that had surreptitiously trespassed onto private property to

steal from and rape the women and children. At the time I had heard the report, I was enjoying tea in a back room with Farnese and Lapis on both my sides. The tea warmed my insides. Lowering my teacup, I gazed at Farnese.

“Since you are the general, you decide the punishment.”

“I wish to execute them.”

“Execution, huh?”

After taking a slight glance at Lapis, I turned back to Farnese.

“Is execution not excessive?”

“They are people who have disobeyed the military command. Additionally, they are also the first offenders. This punishment will decide how retribution will be carried out within the army from now on. This young lady wishes to handle this with severity.”

Lapis broke into the conversation and asked quietly.

“What method of execution will you carry out?”

“In order to establish an upright regulation within the military, their heads must be severed and put on display. This young lady shall behead them.”

Lapis asked again.

“How?”

“.....”

“I asked how you planned to do it, miss.”

“What do you mean by how? Is it not over once their heads are on display?”

“How pathetic.”

Farnese's shoulders twitched because of Lapis' admonishing words. After the day Lapis had vowed that she would become the mother, she frequently scolded and affronted Farnese ever since. Lapis purposely behaved cruelly like Farnese's biological father, who had trampled on her childhood, had done. Farnese had trouble dealing with the Lapis who behaved like this.

"The people are like weeds. They will stand back up no matter how many times they are trampled. Among those weeds, hired soldiers are the most tenacious. The soldiers will not lower themselves just because the heads of three rapists have been cut off. However, that is if you do not certainly implant fear into them beforehand."

"Then what does this young lady....."

"Think of that on your own. Is the object attached to the miss' shoulders not a head but a tin bucket? Why are you unable to think on your own and coming to me for help?"

"....."

"If you are truly the general, then there is no need to confide in me or his highness. Previously, you relied on his highness in order to buy the soldiers' fears, and you are now trying to purchase the soldiers' dread by confiding in me. You will one day have to repay the debt that you have borrowed from his highness and myself, and the name of that price will be nothing less than your incompetence. If one were to count the number of times you had borrowed the hands of others from here and there, then the amount of competence which you lack will surely be immense. Miss, I do not wish for the misfortune of the debt you had piled up due to your own lack of skill, being repaid by his highness instead."

Farnese became silent.

I did not get in between these two. If I were to interfere now, then Lapis would be ashamed and Farnese would feel humiliated. In order to allow my two vassals to exchange with one another and, in their own way, establish a distance, I stayed silent.

After contemplating for a long period of time, Farnese muttered.

“This young lady will personally take the sword and cut down the criminals to.....”

Slap

Farnese lowered her head.

The cheek which was hit had become red.

Lapis spoke.

“Answer again.”

“.....I do not know. Miss Lazuli. This young lady does not have the faintest idea.”

Lapis struck the other party's cheek with more power than before. Farnese cowered. She became miserable like a crinkled wrap of aluminum.

“You did not know from the very beginning. Despite that, you made up a response and hoped that it would coincidentally be the answer. If you were to confess from the start that you did not know, then you would not have been hit, and if you were to have maintained the attitude of trying to figure out the answer until the very end, then the occasion of you being hit would have been non-existent during this time as well. Your dishonesty represents your petty self-pride and your lack of effort represents your incompetence. With what face is a person who is both petty and incompetent sitting here comfortably? Leave immediately.”

Farnese was chased out of the room.

In the room where only Lapis and I remained, it became silent.

“.....”

“.....”

We poured each other tea. We observed the sight of milky-white steam rising up from our teacups.

Even if more tea were to pile on top of itself, the tea remained transparent and did not become cloudy. Tea with a slight tint of color was more transparent than plain water with absolutely no color. Transparency was obvious in something that started off with no color, but for something to have color and be transparent enough to see the bottom of at the same time, was both clean and divine. We desired to educate Farnese like this tea. Lapis and I did not consider the act of turning Farnese into plain water or leaving her as so, as education. We regarded the process of cutting, grinding, brewing the tea leaves, and then finally pouring the brew into the teacup, to be education. If I bestowed color to our daughter and Lapis brewed her, then Farnese would naturally bear a fragrance and emit it on her own. It was an artificiality that processed nature, and it was an artificiality that uncovered nature as well. We did not treat someone who had their thirst for authority castrated and tossed away as an adult, and we did not respect a child who did not know how to handle their authority. We were cold people.

After raising the cup before me and placing it on my lips, the tea was already cool. While drinking that cold tea, the two of us spoke to one another in a low voice.

“How would your highness have dealt with the rapists?”

“Mm. The main point of this issue is providing the fear of punishment to the soldiers. The more distinct the punishment is will make it stronger, and the more obscure the dread is will make it more powerful. It must be clear-cut on one side while giving a feeling of uncertainty on the other. That is the best solution.”

Lapis nodded.

“A logical response.”

“If it were me, then I would have castrated the genitals of the criminals and pierced a hole in the spot where their genitals once

were. After that, I would bring an untamed orc or goblin and make them violate that hole. With this, the point becomes clear that rapists will receive rape in return, and the soldiers will feel fear by the aspect of a hole being created by force and having said hole be violated. Therefore, the troops will feel the dread of penalty all the way to the inside of their skulls.”

Lapis nodded her head once more.

“That is remarkable. Except, it would be more outstanding if you were to also carve their eyes out and insert their testicles into those empty sockets. That way, you could include the metaphor which warns them to not commit a crime while blinded by lust.”

“A splendid idea.”

It was my turn to nod this time.

“Since the metaphor envelops the distinctiveness and obscurity, the penalty will be even more apparent. Furthermore, you won’t be throwing away the severed testicles, and will be recycling them instead, so that makes it more beautiful.”

It was a tacit understanding. The two of us had no reason to not love each other. I understood that the term ‘a match made in heaven’ was not an exaggeration after having met Lapis.

“With how much points does your highness assume the miss will solve this task?”

“I wonder. I feel like she will narrowly fill 30 points.”

“Your highness is generous. This one is predicting 20 points. This one still does not understand why your highness has such a favorable opinion of the miss. Whether she truly does have talent or not, this one is unable to judge it as so.”

“She does indeed have an ignorant side to her.....”

I smiled bitterly.

Regardless, our assessment was purely limited to the domain of politics. The realm of tactics was something entirely different. Our aptitude for the art of war was either completely non-existent or incredibly minimal. Even Lapis should have slightly realized by now that Farnese was a genius in regards to tactics.

“A terrifying monster lives over the mountains and in the land of humans. Farnese is the sword to defeat that monster.”

“.....Puzzles are not this one’s specialty. A monster? Just what kind of person is he for your highness to refer to him as a monster?”

“No.”

I gulped down the rest of my tea.

“That is incorrect. It is a she.”

The ringleader to exterminate the Demon Lords within 30 years.

In this world lay a girl who would hire a humble sword wielding farmer from a slash-and-burn village, and then proceed to send that villager out as the vanguard of war with the title of ‘hero’. In this world lay a girl who would crush enemies who persisted, dust away enemies who yielded, and pull back enemies who fled and tossed them aside. If there was a cruel person who did not change one’s manners after killing nobles or feel sympathy after slaughtering their own subjects, then there was also an empress who would annihilate all of the Demon Lords and establish a united empire.

Therefore.

— Do you know how this world ends?

As the result of all the Demon Lords disappearing, all magical energy in the world will lose its current and cause it to overflow, until finally, it results in the collapse of the world. The mastermind to be the first person to open the doors to a unified continent while also being the first person to destroy the world at the same time, was currently living in this world as a young imperial princess.

Elizabeth.

Elizabeth A. E. von Habsburg.

In order to face her, Farnese was essential. If the imperial princess possessed the sword known as the hero, then I possessed the blade known as Farnese. I carefully savored the taste of the tea in my mouth.

Grow quickly, Farnese.

Hurry and mature, oh Farnese.

We are living in order to not die.



One hour later, the execution was carried out.

Farnese had made a hole in the ice on top of the river. The three culprits were dropped into that hole. However, they were not submerged completely but only to the point where the water reached their chins. The miss ordered the witches to refreeze the river. The offenders' bodies were then completely trapped in the ice water with only their heads sticking out. Farnese bent her back and met their gaze.

“They say that an old monster lurks in this river. Do well to endure.”

The faces of the culprits became deathly pale.

The fiends living in the water swam towards the men. The shadows of beasts stirring underneath the platform of ice could be seen.

The offenders screamed and flailed, and at the same time of their rigorous movement, the monsters rushed at their lower bodies and began tearing it apart.

— Please spare us!

— We apologize, oh great general! I plead you!

Little by little.

Underneath the ice water, the beasts ate away at the men's flesh a small portion at a time. The monsters ripped the feet of the criminals with their teeth, tore the flesh on their waist, and gnawed away at their lungs. As time passed, the screaming weakened. A stillness fell over the surrounding. The thousands of soldiers who were watching the execution were silent. Only the heads of the criminals remained above the ice, while below the platform of ice, a crimson color spread out and dyed the water.

Farnese glanced down at the sight of blood spreading below her feet.

She then lifted up the heads of the culprits. Since their bodies were already completely torn apart from their heads, their heads came off from the ice with ease. Farnese examined the faces which were frozen in a pained expression and muttered like a judge who was grading the work of a 3rd rate painter.

“This is not appealing. The shape of their heads is unsatisfying.”

Farnese tossed the heads to the captains.

“Hang them up.”

The heads of the criminals were impaled onto rods and put on display in the center of the village. The word ‘Rapists’ was carved into their faces with a knife. Blood trailed down the blade mark. In the middle of that night, the cold became so severe that the blood drops froze.

The next day, the soldiers put the severed heads behind them and crossed over the sheet of ice. While stepping over the ice, the soldiers frequently glanced down below their feet. It seemed the thought of the decapitated heads was still being harbored in their minds respectively. After that day, there were no more soldiers who went against the military order.

Unbeknownst to the troops, Lapis and I made an assessment.

“See? 30 points.”

“It appears like 20 points to this one.”

Farnese only chose one option in the fear of penalty. There was no preciseness in the punishment and only obscure dread was filled to the brim. Since it was only filled with ambiguity, punishment had no form, and without a form, it was unable to exist by itself.

Farnese’s punishment could not reach as far as punitive measures. Now, the officers would only fear the Farnese who had enacted punishment. Like a child who was afraid of their parents. Whether it be a person of authority trying to manage politics with fear, or a parent attempting to break in their child with dread, these were common mistakes committed by people. It was not a surprise that a horrible parent was also a terrible person of authority. I scoffed at the individuals who tried to properly run a country when they were unable to manage their own household early on despite using the

method of Confucius and Mencius.

Lapis let out a sigh.

“Your highness, this one is frustrated. At this rate, she will be unable to grasp a single thing even if 5 years were to pass.”

“What do you suggest?”

“This one shall remodel her from the root. If the miss is unable to grasp logic herself, then should we not inject reason into her ourselves?”

Lapis’ eyes were glowing coldly.

—Rote learning was born here in this moment.

Lapis educated Farnese more strongly.

In an area out the sight of the soldiers, Lapis hit and trained Farnese. Lapis did not have the tendency of complimenting the other party. Without any praise, she taught Farnese how to not lower her head, how to not stutter her words, how to not dishevel her facial expressions, how to not slouch her back, and how to not ruin her gait. Lapis spoke quietly.

“Look straight. Speak straight. Walk straight.”

Farnese learned while being hit. After being beaten for 4 days, was when Farnese was barely able to prepare a single speech. Lapis had also taught her how to properly angle her gaze, where to direct her stride, and where to stress her words. Finally, while in front of the gaze of the soldiers, Farnese gave a speech.

— Conserve your courage. Do not try to charge in courageously whenever possible. Conserve your mercy. Do not try to bestow mercy to others whenever you desire. Conserve your lust. Do not try to grab

and rape a broad or lad whenever you crave it. The courage you have when fighting alongside your colleagues is not bravery. The mercy you hand to our enemies is not benevolence. The lust you release to your companion is not craving. This major general despises soldiers who act courageously when they should not, show mercy when they should not, and rape when they should not.

— This general desires for the courage of you gentlemen to be used solely for taking the necks of the enemy, for your mercy to be used solely for forgiving your colleagues, and for your lust to be used solely for taking the families of the enemy. Hold your courage, save your mercy, conserve your lust, and devote your terror and dread to this general. In return, you shall all receive the terror and dread from every foe in the world as tribute.

The soldiers cheered.

Only the soldiers cheered.

After the speech was over, Lapis gave an evaluation.

“30 points. Put in the effort to be able to improvise that level of speech from now on.”

“.....”

Farnese turned to look at me. Her face was still emotionless, and yet, for some reason, a desire for redemption could be felt from her eyes.

“Lord.....”

I smiled brightly.

“10 points. It was a pathetic speech. Be hit more.”

“Even your lordshiip.....”

Farnese fell to her knees on top of the snow.

Farnese was most likely unaware of the fact that in the areas where she was not, Lapis and I discussed the miss' education methods throughout the night.

We are a bit of an excessive couple, my daughter.

Be it for a good reason or bad, Farnese was experiencing growth befitting the general of a Demon Lord.

The soldiers following Farnese were completely becoming the Demon Lord's army.

Miss Farnese reigned over the military as the general, I took care of the army as the monarch, and Lapis supported the military camps as the adviser. Miss Farnese led the soldiers with terror at the front, I held the soldiers together with benevolence at the center, and Lapis put the soldiers at ease with thoroughness at the back, that was our state of affairs. There was no gap between the three of us. We gained merit from each other respectively and interlocked firmly like the characters 凹凸. Strategy–Personnel Administration–Logistic Command breathed together as one body.

Among these, if we were to talk about Lapis, who was handling the logistic command, she was mostly following at the very rear of our march while leading the material supplies. At the back of our army, there were not only wagons, but peddlers, panders, and prostitutes crawling around. It was Lapis' duty to supervise and manage the rights of these people.

She was heartless.

The lover who was cold-blooded to me and cruel to Farnese was what kind of person Lapis Lazuli was. There was no chance that that kind of Lapis would take care of the peddlers generously.

By the time Farnese had executed 2 soldiers, Lapis had already beheaded 20 peddlers. Lapis did not forgive the people who disturbed

the trading area. She gruesomely punished anyone who committed the conduct of scamming the soldiers. Lapis determined the severity of the punishment by the crime committed, and carried out the punitive action on the same day the verdict was decided.

Lapis' ruling was always short.

“Slit your throat.”

“Sever your limbs.”

“Cut open your stomach and display your internal organs.”

“Be buried.”

The verdicts were easy to understand and had no room for misinterpretation.

The horrifying truth was that **the method of punishment was solely execution.**

Execution by beheading was somewhat on the merciful side. The breaking wheel was the second best option after beheading. The slightest bit of one's dignity was at least preserved up to this point.

You could at least look at the corpse and say, ‘So this guy was a goblin’, or, ‘So that guy was an orc’, by identifying the shape of their body.

However, whether it be skinning alive the procurers who treated their prostitutes like slaves and stole their pay, or ripping out the internal organs of peddlers like a bunch of noodles for unfairly gaining profit from soldiers who were lacking in the head, there was no dignity here whatsoever. There were only blood red entrails.

Lapis was cold-hearted.

If there was a single mistake on the directory then someone would, without a doubt, die on that day. Even if the numbers matched the

list, as a person whose previous job was a merchant, she noticed the deception and made certain to kill the one responsible. It was impossible to fool Lapis who used to be a peasant that had risen up to be an executive in the Keuncuska Firm.

Since the soldiers at the front were afraid of General Farnese, and the suppliers at the back were terrified of Lapis' punishments, both the front and rear of our forces were tranquil.

The voices of people disregarding Miss Farnese by claiming that she was a human harlot, disappeared. And the scornful words which spoke ill of Lapis by calling her a vulgar half-breed peasant had also vanished.

All I had to do was stay idle.

Even if I messed around, the march of my army progressed with no issue.

While our journey went on for a week, the captains uttered in surprise that it was the first time in their lives to experience such an easy march. Normally, an army would lose energy the further they went and their aim would weaken, but his highness' army gathered strength the more we walked and our goal became clearer, so they were able to understand what the term Royal Grace truly meant because of this, was what the captains stated.

I, who was actually comfortably doing nothing, nodded my head in response. All I had to do was give their wages on time, occasionally punish the ones who embezzled the money, and the soldiers would cry out, 'Hooray for his highness Demon Lord!', on their own. Farnese and Lapis were the ones' doing the hard work, but I had the monopoly of all the praises.

Referentially, this is the method of winning in life.

Bonjour—.

And like that, a week passed.

An open field was spread out before us.

With a ‘clang, clang’, the sound of a frozen brook being broken resonated. Soldiers were holding tools and pounding on the ice. Past the men, a countless amount of tents were lined up.

The stream flowed for a distance before our vision of it was blocked by tents. It continued flowing while in its hidden state and came out in a whimsical place somewhere else to continue flowing. At every spot the brook came out, 10 goblins were attached and were smashing away at the ice. This scenery extended out all the way to the horizon.

Farnese examined the horizon with her eyes.

“Approximately a massive army of 60,000.....”

The dark blue skin of orcs, the green wrinkled skin of goblins, and the sturdy gray skin of trolls crowded the military encampment. It was swarming with color. All kinds of miscellaneous things were mixed together and squirming around like an ant’s nest. Those fellows had set up their own world over there.

It was a world that I didn’t really want to squeeze into. I wished to decline politely. I was a bit too young to accept something that was being crowded, being swarmed, and squirming as beautiful.

“Would it truly be 60,000? Those goblins over there are not wearing clothes so they are most likely servants and not troops. This is worrying.....”

“What are you concerned about, lord?”

“Since they have freely mixed the soldiers who fight with the servants who aid, there is no possibility that their military discipline will be stern. I fear that the number of soldiers may appear many, but that, in truth, their worth does not match their quantity.”

While staring at the lineup of the Demon Lord Allied Forces, which

had gathered here to suppress the humans, Farnese spoke. It seemed she was overwhelmed by the number of tents covering the field.

“But is it still not a grand spectacle?”

“Quite.”

I nodded.

“This magnificent view is indeed grand.”

2nd month and 12th day.

We arrived at the promised field.

□ **The Northern Guardian, Margrave of Rosenberg, Georg von Rosenberg**

Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 2, Day 12

Polles

— A rumor has been going around that the end is approaching.

— They say the Demon Lords are going to arrive while steering the Black Death to us.

— That's a false rumor, a false rumor.....

The Saintess of the Empire coughed out blood and fell unconscious.

The saintess claimed that she had witnessed the end of the world in her dream. The soldiers gathered in twos and whispered among one another that the saintess had been possessed by an evil spirit. The fear on the soldiers' faces was apparent.

— Black smoke shall engulf the mountains. It shall swallow the empire and, at last, consume the entire continent. The gray clouds shall have no limits or bounds, and thus, the winter shall continue with no limits or bounds. Freeze in this continuous winter. Everything shall freeze. The black smoke shall not clear. The black shall.....

Speaking up to that point, the saintess then vomited blood. The blood was sticky because of the content that was mixed together with her blood. The reason I was able to detail this incident so confidently

was because I was there in person to hear the prophecy during the previous night.

As I was the commander in charge of the northern region, I participated in the conference for the highest leading members of the government. We had received information that the Demon Lord Allied Forces were going to invade soon. We had to prepare against the invasion. I was not the sole person to partake in the strategy meeting, but the authority figures, His Highness the Crown Prince and Her Highness the Imperial Princess, and adding to that, The Saintess, were present as well. In that location, the Saintess was possessed by a spirit.

— The black shall, the black shall, the black shall.....

The saintess coughed blood. She vomited repetitively. Her eyes rolled up to the back of her head and revealed the whites of her eyes. There were many clumps from her intestines mixed into her blood. The saintess convulsed. We urgently called for the clerics and healed her.

The Imperial Princess made an entreaty.

— This incident is confidential. Only we must know of this. Do not divulge this information outside. If the soldiers were to hear the saintess' prophecy, then they will be heavily shaken, thus meaning, we cannot allow our morale to drop in our current situation where the Demon Lords plan to invade. No matter what cost, watch your words.

I agreed.

The Crown Prince, while consumed by fear, nodded his head as well.

With that, the case was supposed to be buried, but—for some reason, not a day had passed before the prophecy ended up being leaked. At the entire front, at that.

From the veteran officers to the new recruits, they all knew of the news that the saintess had vomited pitch black blood last night. Even the peddlers at the bottom of the military camp knew the contents of the prophecy. People whispered that it was an ominous omen.

Throughout the night, I wandered through the crowds and reprimanded the captains. There was nothing more terrifying than a wild rumor. Nothing more horrifying than the sound of words. Since soldiers lose and injure their lives effortlessly, they felt fear and dread just as easily. That is the core of a soldier. Since I have lived for more than 60 years now, I have seen many occasions of an army falling apart due to a groundless rumor. There was nothing which assured that it would not happen this time as well.

I wished to decline being defeated before even engaging with the Demon Lord Allied Forces. Measures must most likely be discussed immediately. Above all else, I cannot fall until I have avenged myself for the humiliation I suffered last autumn.....

“Your Highness the Imperial Princess, I am here on this morning to pay my respects.”

“Enter.”

The Imperial Princess spent her time enclosed by a white tent. She disliked going under a roof to sleep. The Imperial Princess declared that if the troops were being struck by snow and rain, and if one was unable to prevent the fall of that snow and rain, then it should not be avoided. The soldiers held that Imperial Princess in high esteem, and worried for the Imperial Princess' health foremost when it rained or snowed.

.....Of course, the Imperial Princess' action was most likely a political scheme, but the majority of nobles were unable to properly carry out even this simple ploy. Separate to the Imperial Princess' personality, I respected her ability.

Pushing the white cloth to the side, I became surprised by the sight of the Imperial Princess.

And the scene that was utterly unexpected.

Inside the tent, a long table was placed.

This was fine.

That was a normal scene.

But if there was a corpse of an alligator spread out on top of the table, and additionally, if the Imperial Princess was personally holding a knife and butchering that alligator, then the scenery went a thousand miles from being normal.

“For the margrave to come pay his respects. What a rare occasion.”

The Imperial Princess silently stripped the skin off the gator.

She did not glance towards my direction even once.

“Did you not dislike me?”

“Nothing of the sort, your highness. This general has always respected your highness.”

“That isn't a lie. Not a lie. However, you also do not revere me. Is that not so?”

“.....”

“You respect me. However, occasionally the word ‘respect’ is nothing more than a slightly safer and milder way to pronounce the word ‘scorn’. Words are trivial.”

Thack

The Imperial Princess shaved a piece of fragrant wood and scattered it into a brass incense burner. The brass, heated by a charcoal fire, slowly lit the chunks of wood aflame. The aromatic wood burned. As smoke formed, the fragrance spread. The aroma covered the smell of the alligator's blood. While hiding the scent of blood, the fragrant smoke rose up densely. The fragrance seeped all the way down to my gut.

Thuck

The Imperial Princess skinned the alligator within the smoke.

The Imperial Princess peeled the skin by severing the outer layer of muscle and stabbing into the inner layer of muscle. The boundary of the outer and inner layer was clearly visible to the princess. I unintentionally marveled at the skillful hand movement that was able to establish a border in the flesh and carved that boundary out naturally like a professional butcher. I could not imagine when and where the lady, who was born into the highest lineage in the world, had learned how to skin an alligator. The Imperial Princess, who resembled the secluded place in which she was born and raised in, was difficult to handle.

“Do you not think that the majority of the conversations we have shared can be condensed into more simple terms? I like you. I hate you. A person's mind may start from there, but they are unable to arrive at this location in the end. Although people may refer to this as the path or course of life, I honestly call it a waste of time. Sir Rosenberg. Let us not waste each other's time. Why did you come find me despite your animosity towards me? Tell me the reason why I have to listen to the words of a man, who does not revere me, while it is still noon.”



Was it a threat? Or was she serious?

I was unable to figure out the emotions of the other party. There were no expressions on her face. It appeared as if she was purely focused on the task of skinning the alligator. Even though the Imperial Princess was outside, it felt as if she was still residing within the palace. It even felt like she was the palace. If the amount of nobility she had purged did not reach over the dozens—then I may have had already been deceived by her outer appearance by this point.

“Your highness. You cannot gain the admiration of nobility automatically.”

“Oh dear. I do not desire for your admiration.”

The Imperial Princess shed her feelings and laughed.

It was a sound of laughter with no temperature.

“I was merely asking what meaning your respect has. The word respect contains 5 different meanings and 10 variations of tone. That is why I do not trust words. What I demand from you is not words, but actions. Distinct-Evident-Articulate-actions. Of course, you would not listen even if I were to order you to like this. You are a stubborn old man, after all.”

“.....”

“Speak.”

“.....Information that Demon Lord Barbatos, Demon Lord Marbas, and Demon Lord Paimon, as the key individuals, are calling together an army has arrived. Although the total military strength is uncertain, it is clear that they have more than 50,000 but less than 70,000.”

“It seems it is not as fearsome as I had imagined. They do not have Baal nor do they have Agares. Barbatos is ignorant, Marbas is

indecisive, and Paimon is..... well, Paimon.”

“Your highness is currently underestimating the enemy forces.”

“That is not so.”

At that moment, the Imperial Princess looked at me for the first time.

My mind felt needlessly restless because her purple eyes felt like they could pierce through a person’s psyche.

“No. Oh dear, by the Gods. That is not so at all! Why would I possibly underestimate the enemy forces? Never in my life have I ever devaluated someone.”

“Is that the case?”

“Of course. As proof of that, you are still alive.”

“.....”

“You are a man of talent that is essential to our empire. The House of Rosenberg has been loyal to the imperial family for the past 500 years. And they have protected us from the invasions of the Demon Lords coming from the Black Mountains for 1,000 years. You are a competent individual, Georg. I respect you. If perhaps, I did not respect you, then—something like a province warlord in command of troops could not possibly still exist, is that not so?”

“.....”

“This is what it means to show one’s purpose through actions. It is distinct, evident, and articulate. Georg, I at times ponder how outstanding it would be if people lived without ever using words.”

Rip

The muscle was torn.

The Imperial Princess plunged her knife into the neck region of the gator. The neck was more tender than any other area on an alligator's body. Once the Imperial Princess moved her blade, the leather on the neck was skinned off just like that.

"It is fortunate that that situation is not now. Be at ease and continue. My ears are prepared to listen courteously."

"If the Demon Lords are going to invade, then they must choose one of three paths. The first path is the passage in the mountains....."

"A passage that leads to the Kingdom of Teuton. That has no relation to us."

".....The second path is through the plains."

"The path to the Polish-Lithuanian^[1] Kingdom. That certainly does not matter to our empire as well. For goodness' sake, we'll have to pray for the Gods to influence the Demon Lord armies to go towards the mountains or plains. We'll be able to catch our breaths while they are going to war, after all."

"Your highness."

I furrowed my brows.

I could not stand that sort of response.

"I apologize, but if this general is correct, they are the same humans as us."

"And there are no other animals that can kill humans as efficiently as other humans. Sir Rosenberg, please stop trying to act refined on your own!"

The Imperial Princess gave a timid laugh.

"Exactly how many villagers have burned to death on the mountains this winter? 100? 200?"

I closed my mouth.

“Or was it 300? I’ve heard that the number effortlessly surpasses 1,000, and if my memory serves me right, those villagers were also the same humans as we are. What did our great Sir Rosenberg do while thousands of villagers were massacred as humans? You observed. You only watched.”

“.....”

“Do you not consider the word ‘observed’ to be the same term as ‘fire watching’, but expressed in a more elegant manner? Oh, Northern Guardian, One of the Four Margraves, the Controller of both the Black and White Fortresses—Sir von Rosenberg.”

I stared at the eye of the gator. Since my head was lowered, I could not meet the eyes of the Imperial Princess. Instead, I intended to at least glare at the beast.

The Imperial Princess let words flow out.

“It seems I have mocked you severely. I apologize. I am apologizing for the fact that I do not feel particularly sorry. Continue to keep that in mind.”

“.....I shall bear that in mind.”

“Good.”

Riiiiip

The Imperial Princess gripped the back skin of the gator and tore it off. The leather came off instantly. The skin smoothly peeled off following the line which she had lacerated earlier. Once the leather was gone, a light pink inner-flesh was revealed. The color of alligator meat was modest and light.

“Do not concern yourself with the passage in the mountains or the path in the plains. All we have to do is defend the path leading to the

empire. Do you require the assistance of the imperial family?"

"The North does not require help from anyone."

I responded as clearly as possible.

"But I shall express my gratitude to your highness' offer to help."

"Oh dear, it seems he's become upset because of my teasing..... It is only your loss if a beautifully aged man like yourself were to lose your temper towards this shameful girl. Just obediently accept the reinforcements."

"I apologize, but your highness, I truly do not require reinforcements. This one shall defend the mountains, so your highness should solidify the home front alongside His Highness the Crown Prince. That way, if we are forced to, we will be able to make contact with either Teuton or Polish-Lithuania and spread out a strategy."

"With my brother? You sure know how to make me laugh."

"....."

"Do you see that fellow as someone who knows how to manage military affairs? He is a man who is unable to properly conduct his own mouth and bottom. Did you not see it as well? I warned everyone to remain silent about the saintess' prophecy to such a degree, and yet, the rumor spread within a single night."

"Your grace is immeasurable, your highness"

The Imperial Princess closed her mouth. I was unable to grasp why she had shut her mouth. Shortly after, the Imperial Princess spoke again.

"My brother's mouth is more loose than a whore's bottom hole. Even the privates do not respect my brother. Are you telling me to gather an army with that sort of man?"

“.....For this general, the Crown Prince is an equal commander. His Majesty the Emperor ordered this general to manage the north, and did not treat the Crown Prince any differently there.”

“Forsooth, it seems you are loyal to my father, the king. I understand. I respect your loyalty.But by the way, Margrave, do you not think that the term filial piety shines the brightest when dutiful towards a parent with no worth, and the word loyalty shines brighter when faithful to a lord with no value? Your loyalty to the emperor is quite marvelous. It is impressive.”

The Imperial Princess stabbed the knife into the table.

With a washcloth, the Imperial Princess cleaned her blood soaked hands. Once she had done so, she lightly patted my shoulder. The Imperial Princess' face was far, but her voice almost felt as if it was being whispered directly into my ear.

“You are a loyalist, Sir Rosenberg.”

“.....”

“But you cannot buy my respect with fidelity. If you wish for me to respect you, then over all else, you must obtain victory. Although I may be accepting the military orders since you are the supreme commander of this upcoming war, if by some small chance, you were to commit a mistake..... Well, I'll most likely be very disappointed, will I not?”

“This general shall not bestow disappointment.”

“I shall trust you.”

And the Imperial Princess spoke the words.

“Habsburg grants their faith a single time.”

“The North shall not forget.”

The two of us exchanged the maxim passed down in our families from the House of Habsburg and the House of Rosenberg respectively. The very act of exchanging the mottoes which were passed down for nearly 1,000 years was sacred. The vow of the Imperial Princess, who appeared like the one person who would not place her trust in others the most, felt that much more substantial. The moment I break that single faith, she will purge me without a doubt.....

The Imperial Princess stabbed the alligator skin onto a rod and raised it up in the center of the military camp.

Alligators are known as the descendants of dragons. Dragons are the symbol of Demon Lords. While staring up at the gator skin, the soldiers whispered among one another that that monster was caught by Her Highness the Imperial Princess personally.

After examining that the signs of the soldiers still being afraid had disappeared, I thought about the armies of the Demon Lords that were approaching from over the mountains. Whether they will be a strong army or a rabble, and what fate they were going to bring with them, it was difficult to make an assumption. Like the Imperial Princess whose face was hidden by the smoke, the armies of the Demon Lords were similarly hidden by the mountains, and yet, I was unable to judge whether I should be afraid of the thing which could not be seen despite being by my side, or if I should fear the thing that could not be seen because of the distance. Surrounded by the fear from behind and dread in front, my body languished.

I beheaded the two military personnel responsible for circulating the wild rumor among the troops and hung their heads.

▯ **The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian**
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 2, Day 12
Yotvingian Plains, Demon Lord Allied Forces Garrison

— Where are those vulgar people crawling from?

— Ah, don't you know? Isn't that His Honor Dantalian? That pink haired bitch is a peasant, and the blonde bitch beside her is a human.

— Sheesh. Does that guy have some idiosyncrasy of only bedding peasants?

— They say that people from a low birth are tight down there, you know?

— Human? Are you saying that's a human? That?

The Demon Lord Allied Forces were a rabble. Since the term rabble is incredibly old-fashioned, there was a need to be a bit more honest.

I believed that there is life in words. For example, words similar to 'universe' were too antiquated for me to use. I preferred the world over the universe. If you were a refined individual with common sense, then by distinguishing a dead language and a contemporary language, you must at times revitalize a half-dead language, and at other times, beat a half-dead language to death.

With no room for debate, I was a splendidly refined individual. Therefore, I elegantly expressed the word rabble in a bit more fresh language.

The Demon Lord Allied Forces were a bunch of damned pieces of shit.

As soon as we entered through the camp gate with our banners held out in front of us, for some reason, soldiers who were pitiable like bums approached us and spoke nonsense.

— Your Honor Dantalian! To bring a human bitch in front of us humble fellows who are gathered here to suppress the humans, we are able to understand your honor's immeasurable motive. If your honor has had enough fun with that harlot, then please allow us lowly ones to have a taste as well!

— That human harlot's presence is dignified, so her being the emperor is evident. If she's so robust during the day, then just imagining how boyish she'd be during the night is putting me at a loss.

Looking at the soldiers blocking our path, I let out a sigh.

Seeing that they were coming at me without any fear, it was clear that they were the subordinates of a Demon Lord of a much higher rank than myself. To the demons, the humans were the enemy of our kind, and their social status was considered as peasants. To them, for a Demon Lord like myself to make a human like Farnese into my acting general was definitely a mistake. I rebuked them moderately.

“It seems you fools have lost your minds. Move aside before your balls are removed and shoved into your mouths. Or in reverse, do you want your throats to be slit and your dicks shoved in there?”

The soldiers laughed loudly.

— For your honor to say that you will personally jack us off. We are so gracious that we do not know where to place our bodies.

The crowd split in half, and thus our path was finally open.

Commanding Lapis and Farnese to move to my side, the three of us moved forward with the heads of our horses aligned next to one another. Lapis quietly spoke in a tone that only I could hear.

“You did well to endure, your highness.”

“What do I have to endure? You are the ones to have received the ridicule, so you two did well holding back.”

“What could your highness be talking about? This one is later on going to take the lives of those soldiers in secret, so your highness did well in enduring right this moment. The insult this one has received will, of course, be repaid by this one.”

“.....”

Those soldiers were piteous. I still vividly remembered the method where a certain maid was poisoned to death for having insulted Lapis. These fellows should be happy if their corpses were at least left intact.

Farnese muttered.

“This young lady cannot understand. Why does every officer who looks at this young lady wrongly assume that this young lady had slept with your lordship? Thinking logically, there is no chance that a man like your lordship could possibly be allowed in this young lady’s bed.”

“Take the situation more seriously, you idiot.”

I’m not sure whether it’s because this child had always shut herself in a library to read history books all day, but she didn’t have the sensibility to accept reality.

Leading my vassals, who I could not say had a strong distinct

characteristic since they actually had nothing but distinct characteristics, we went into the deepest part of the encampment. The demon soldiers poured jeers on us by shouting ‘Boo— boo—’. They called me ‘The King of Peasants’, Lapis as ‘The King’s Whore’, and Farnese was referred to as ‘The King’s Slave’. It felt like we had all of a sudden become a popular idol group.

How poignant.

For them as well, every day was shit, thus their lives should have been spent enduring this kind of days, and yet instead, they scorned peasants and slaves. They most likely suffered because of the nobles and were pressured to look down, and the only thing below them were peasants and slaves. It became a state of affairs where the things they received from the nobles were passed straight down to the people below them. What could possibly console them? Was there anything more to say to the reasonability of these low people, who could not gather together, but fought among each other instead? The ones pressuring them to not look upwards were the nobles and royalty such as myself, so the right to punish them for belittling the things below them was something which I did not possess.

“It seems there are a lot of people to kill.”

.....Except for Lapis.

Since Lapis was a girl born at the absolute bottom, to her, she had more than enough rights to send the heads of those above her flying. She was a girl whom even I could not stop. No one could stop her. I prayed for the repose of those poignant souls in advance. Please have an easy passage into eternity.

It was at the moment we were docilely passing by one of the military camps. The soldiers started to throw clumps of snow at our ranks. My men became bewildered and stopped their advance. The 11 members of the Berbere Sisters, who could be referred to as my royal bodyguards, instantly covered the area around me.

The snow collided against the witches. Being hit by snow on their

foreheads, cheeks, and torsos, the witches became soiled. The witches silently endured the barrage until they became a complete mess. They did not utter a single word while being hit. Just like the time they were abused by Demon Lord Andromalius in the past.

From the other side, the demon troops made invidious remarks.

— For your honor's mistress to be an outcast, general to be a human, and royal bodyguards to be witches, your honor's good faith impales the sky. Indeed, it's befitting of the King of Peasants.

— You must be very fortunate to be so popular with women, your honor! Please teach the people how to bed lowly harlots and spread the information throughout the world.

Snow continued to fly towards us. They were not aiming at me but were throwing the snow in order to hit the witches. Despite that, the witches, in concern for the worst situation, did not leave my side for even the slightest moment. The witches merely guarded me with a stoic expression on their face.

“.....Lapis.”

“Yes, your highness?”

“Where are those bullock bones from?”

“It appears a three-legged goat is drawn on their flag. That belongs to the rank 12th Demon Lord, Sitri. The soldiers led by Sitri are renowned for their rough volubility and coarse speaking habits.”

“Indeed.”

I let out a sigh.

“Then if I were to slit the throats of those soldiers, that'll be the

same as making the Mountain Faction into our enemy.”

Sitri was a loyal subject to Paimon. Even if they had provoked us first, a big incident would occur if I were to kill them thoughtlessly.

No, they may be starting this ruckus in order to cause a big incident on purpose. If the current situation were to get any worse, then there will certainly be a faction who will use my decision of putting a human as my general as the problem, and place it as the public opinion. That the privates were probably dissatisfied just because I had made an individual with no prestige into my general.

If that were to happen then I would be at a disadvantage. They would be taunting me and dragging me into a situation where it was favorable for them. What should I do? How should I deal with this mess.....?

I wonder if it had detected that I had fallen into deep thought. With a jaunty sound effect, a selection window appeared before me.

[1. Punish the insults.]

[2. Endure the insults.]

I carefully gazed at the words floating in mid-air.

Even if the soldiers were wretchedly throwing clumps of snow towards a Demon Lord, such as myself, I did not feel any particular anger because of it. Insults were disgraceful when done by someone of a similar standing. So what if some soldiers tossed snow at me?

The problem was face. The issue was always one's honor. The witches were being hit by the filth in my stead, but if I were to do nothing and pass the situation by like this, then my honor as a

monarch would be damaged. Farnese, who must have also been concerned of this, whispered to me some advice.

“Lord. Should we not kill those men immediately? Even if we do not kill them, if we bind them and shove their faces into the ground then they’ll shut up on their own.”

“This one disapproves.”

Lapis whispered to me in a low voice on my other side.

“Seeing that mere privates are openly insulting your highness, there is no doubt that Demon Lord Sitri is supporting them from behind. There is no benefit your highness can gain by colliding against Sitri. Refrain from doing something rash.”

“How could enduring be a king’s only method? Miss Lapis. You never close your eyes towards the ridicule you receive, and yet, how could you request for his lordship to turn a blind eye towards the humiliation he receives?”

“Since this one is a humble vassal, it is fine for this one to behave basely. A humble individual’s generosity is the act of forgetting oneself and behaving with impudence. Disgracefulness is a shallowness befitting this one’s place. However, his highness is different. Please be tolerant.”

I spoke.

“Stop.”

“This is not something that can be solved by stopping, lord. This young lady is an illegitimate child of a lowly servant girl, so it is appropriate for this young lady to receive insults. However, how is this young lady supposed to endure the situation where her lord is unjustly being ridiculed? Please order this young lady to take their necks.”

“Your highness. Miss Farnese is still young. Do not listen to her.

Even if the people were to praise your highness, your majesty will not rise, and even if people were to jeer at your highness, your dignity will not be damaged. Please understand.”

“Sheesh. I told you two to stop, and yet you two continue to bicker.”

I raised my right hand.

The moment I did so, the witches all raised their staves at once. My troops also broke apart from their marching ranks and lifted their spears. It took no longer than a couple of seconds for my troops, which consisted of 4,000 soldiers, to display their vigor.

The encampment became quiet. An aggressive silence, which felt as if a fight could erupt at any second, flowed. Even the soldiers who were tossing snow at us had pulled out their swords with their muddied hands. They continued to babble on narrow-mindedly.

— Does your honor plan to cut us lowly subjects down? That’s fine. Since your honor had stabbed the throat of His Highness Andromalius in order to save the life of a succubus whore, then killing tens or hundreds of us lowly people for those witches should be possible, right?

— Please step over our corpses with your honor’s grace.

I dismounted from my horse. I wiped off the mud smeared on the witches’ faces with my clothes. The mud was smudged on them rather excessively so it did not get wiped off easily. Moistening the lower end of my clothes with the snow, I wiped clean the skin of the witches.

—.....

The sight of a member of the noblest stratum in the demon world cleaning the face of a peasant, hundreds of thousands of soldiers watched while holding their breath. Within the heavy atmosphere, only the witches chatted and giggled quietly.

“Ahah, really our master [\[2\]](#).....”

“His way of thinking is really abnormal, isn’t it?”

“Right—?”

I deliberately whispered to them in a serious tone.

“Be quiet. Do not ruin the mood.”

“Roger.”

The witches responded faintly. Although my facial expression was stoic like before, it was not the same impassive expression as before. I sincerely cleaned all 11 witches.

The mud that was trickling from the witches was all moved onto my clothes, so now I was the one that was filthy. I took my mantle off and draped it over the leader of the group, Witch Humbaba. After brushing her shoulder twice, I remounted my horse.

“Let us depart.”

“Set forth!”

Farnese shouted.

The soldiers who were enthusiastically ridiculing us could not stop our march. As if they were embarrassed, they lowered their heads. The bottom line in the selection window glowed brightly and dispersed in mid-air.

A kind and merciful decision!

Witch Humbaba's affection went up by 3.

Witch Stheno's affection went up by 9.

Witch Euryale's affection went up by 8.

Looking up at the words that broke apart like a flurry of snow, I smiled. I was already doing well, so was there really a need for it to compliment me about it? 100 points is already 100% so there's nothing more to add, after all.

Lapis spoke.

"95 points, your highness."

"Ara? That score is subtly suspicious. What are the grounds for the deduction in points?"

"A man who is too perfect is aggravating, is he not? This one was concerned that your highness would become bothersome, so this one was being slightly considerate. Since removing 5 points is, in truth, the same as adding 5 points, this is this one's method of displaying her loyalty to your highness."

Sure.

Good for you!

□ Demon Lord of Benevolence, Rank 9th, Paimon
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 2, Day 12
Yotvingian Plains, Demon Lord Allied Forces Garrison

“What should we do, sis.....?”

Sitri asked with a teary voice.

We quietly watched Demon Lord Dantalian go by with his troops in tow. There was nothing we could do. This lady’s plan of provoking Dantalian, in order to somehow or another delay the start of war, was thus a complete failure.

“I’m sorry, Big Sis Paimon. I chose the most vulgar mouthed soldiers among my troops and spread them out, but it seems that wasn’t enough.”

“No. It’s not your fault Sitri. The other party had merely handled the situation smoothly. I tried provoking him since I had heard a rumor that he cherished his subordinates, but for his expression to not shift even once.....”

My mind felt heavy.

Ever since last year, the feeling that this lady, no, not only this lady but all of the Demon Lords as well, were being swept up by Dantalian’s pace did not disappear. Was it merely this lady who was mistaken?

It was fine to consider Dantalian’s reputation to be the absolute worst. He had declared an outcast as his fiancée(This is illegal), made a human into his acting general(This as well is illegal), and furthermore, his Demon Lord Castle, which was his stronghold, had fallen. In the public eye, the assessment of Dantalian was horrendous. A fool blinded by love, a filthy debauchee.....

However, this lady thought differently.

There was no other choice but to think differently.

Within half a year, Dantalian was able to rise up to one of the highest positions among the richest individuals in the demon world. If that man were a fool, then that would be impossible to achieve. If you looked further into it, the trigger to start this upcoming war originated from Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle having been invaded. Was this a coincidence?

If anything, should one not look at this backwards?

That that man had personally induced his public image to appear like a fool and a parvenu.

“.....”

My face became stiff.

If this lady's intuition was correct, then that would mean that Dantalian was playing around with the entire demon world at his own will. To always achieve what he desired, while at the same time making that achievement appear like pure chance. He disguised everything to appear as if it had flowed like that because of luck. There were a countless number of people who fail but pretend to have succeeded. However, people who have succeeded but acted as if they had failed were rare. Furthermore, the occasion where that act would be carried on and continued was even more uncommon.

If we don't deal with him by any means then.

“Big sister. Are you alright?”

Sitri looked at me with a worried expression on her face.

Oh dear, it seems this lady's face had unintentionally become excessively serious without her knowing. Following my long time habit, I moved the edges of my lips and formed a natural smile.

“Yes, I am fine. You are very kind, Sitri.”

“Ehe.”

Once I stroked her head, Sitri rubbed her cheek against my hand. How cute.

That night, I sent away every soldier who was in the vicinity of my quarters and called for the spy. The spy was a short girl. With a pitch black cloak wrapped around her entire body, the spy lowered herself to one knee.

“Did your highness call?”

“Yes. Was there any inconvenience on your way here?”

“Ahah, it’s alright. Sir Dantalian’s camp is currently having a drinking party, so the security is lax. There were no cumbersome gazes while concealing myself all the way here, so it’s fine.”

“A drinking party, is it.....?”

“He threw a banquet saying that everyone did a good job for marching through the snow and rain for a week. Since alcohol and boar meat are being served indefinitely, the privates are going wild. Normally, the night watch would be managed by a girl named Lazuli, but she was caught by Sir Dantalian and is currently pouring him his drinks. That’s why this one was able to sneak out easily—.”

“.....”

That was most likely not the only reason for throwing a banquet.

Although Dantalian may have sagaciously gotten past the situation from this afternoon, the likelihood that Dantalian’s soldiers were still harboring in their minds the humiliation that their monarch had received was high. The banquet was held to disentangle their frustrated minds.

Indeed.

Dantalian was not a foolish fellow. This lady's instincts were warning her as so.

In the world, something with a million to one chance could always occur. The path that Dantalian had walked until now could truly be nothing more than a coincidence. A method to identify whether it was an inevitability or a coincidence did not exist for this lady. If the ability to discern whether something was an inevitability or a coincidence was not available, this lady tended to lean towards it being an inevitability.

That was why I had bribed the spy in front of me.

“Show me the evidence that you claimed could slander Dantalian.”

The spy took out a pocket watch from inside her cloak and laid it on the floor. As soon as this lady flicked her wrist, the pocket watch floated to her hand. Since this spy's stratum was so low that it could be compared to that of an outcast, in accordance with the laws in the demon world, direct contact with her was forbidden.

“Is this a Memory Play artifact?”

“Yup. Setting it to 12, 7, 5, 4, 2, 3, and 11 will do.”

“This lady is looking forward to seeing what sort of content lies within this.”

I turned the hour hand of the pocket watch according to the sequence the spy had stated.

A white smoke leaked out from the watch and a video was projected onto the fumes. Dantalian's figure appeared within the scenery displayed on the smoke. Dantalian was holding the human girl, whom he had made into his acting general, in his arms. Witches could be seen as well.

— Turn this place into Hell.

— Aha? By ‘Hell’, does master mean?

— I can smell a scent somewhere. It is the smell of fat emanating from disgusting masses of flesh. It is the smell of greed and hypocrisy

Is that..... a market?

Seeing that there were iron cages around them, it seemed to be a slave market. What appeared to be the corpses of guards were collapsed on the ground. Dantalian grinned towards the witches.

— If they are pigs, then it would only be appropriate for them to behave like pigs and oink in a pigsty, and yet, why are they striding so boldly along the streets? What are you to do when these pigs are arrogantly trying to imitate people and shove their noses everywhere?

— Naturally, you have to imprint onto them that they are pigs!

— Only people can possess slaves. It seems those runts are arrogantly going against the moral of beasts and trying to handle slaves.

— Please give us the order. We shall make this place into a slaughterhouse tonight!

— Yes. The command that I shall order is slaughter. Slaughter those bastards without giving them the chance to even scream. This is not murder. Do not let your conscience weigh down your heart and hesitation take over your hands. As you are lords of all creation, with the authority granted to you all by the Goddesses, slaughter these livestock for our extensive cause.

— As you command, master!

And the slaughter began.

Shooting through the night sky, the witches killed every last human. It was not only humans. Even the demons caught as slaves were put to death. The market instantly degenerated into a burning hell, and people burned between the flames. I watched the figures of them wailing while dumbstruck.

“What is this.....?”

“The scene of the slaughter that Sir Dantalian had ordered.”

The spy responded.

“Although the rumors say that Sir Dantalian had picked up Miss Farnese, who was wandering around aimlessly, by chance. Ahah. That is actually a lie. Sir Dantalian had personally gone to rescue Miss Farnese who was confined within the slave market in Pavia.”

“But why the order to slaughter.....?”

“Since there can’t be any evidence.”

This lady became speechless.

For that reason alone.

The massacre was still taking place in the video. Regardless of their race or age, the witches got rid of every figure that came into their sight. There were even the tremendously weak sirens and children among the slaughtered.

The screams of a child and the laughter of witches mixed together. It blended together like smoke. Endlessly, endlessly..... my head became so dizzy that I ended up closing my eyes. Until the video had ended. This lady could not contain the tragedy in her eyes.

“.....Is this not fabricated?”

“Fabricate a video of this size? Surely your highness is joking—. Even if someone were to use disguise magic to imitate the core individuals, Sir Dantalian and Miss Farnese, then what about the rest of the people? Does your highness think that hundreds of mages would use disguise magic to make this sort of video?”

The spy laughed.

“Ahahah, if that were true then a rumor would have spread a long time ago. Your highness should know well since your highness Paimon is a mage much more outstanding than this one, but utilizing hundreds of mages in secret is impossible. Additionally, the screams from the children are extremely realistic, so to consider that as an act is—.”

Slap

The spy fell to the floor. The spy, who was slapped by my hand, tumbled onto the ground. Because this lady could not bear it any longer, while forgetting everything about the demon world laws, I kicked the spy.

“Aha, ah hah haha.....ahahahahahah.....”

Even while being kicked, the spy continued to laugh. What could possibly be that funny? Could the sight of innocent children being killed be nothing more than a joke to this spy? The sound of this spy’s laughter was detestable. The sound of giggling unpleasantly latched onto my skin. This lady stomped on the spy with more force in order to strip herself of that unpleasantry. I felt disgusted at myself for having hired someone like this as my spy. I was the fool for having believed that they were pure at one point.

The bunch who had sold their souls.

The absolute bottom of everything inferior.

The prostitutes of souls.

With her face planted into the ground, the spy grinned.

“Your highness—? It is fine to vent your anger, but didn’t your highness hire us since you needed this sort of evidence—?”

—Witch.

The head of the Berbere Sisters, the possessor of the Triphyllous Badge, Witch Humbaba.

Even after her platinum blonde hair was covered in dirt, she did not lose her amusement. There was no madness in her laugh. Whether witches laughed normally, laughed because something was funny, or laughed when they were feeling anguished, their laughter was constantly the same. Therefore, it was constantly disgusting.

“.....You are a bunch who should not have been born into this world.”

“We hear that often—.”

“Is there truly no feeling of sorriness for the lives of others in your minds?”

“This one apologizes, but we’ve already sold our souls—?”

It seems words would not get through to her.

Although people considered it regrettable that we could not converse with beasts, beasts did not care about being unable to converse with people. Similarly, witches did not even contemplate the idea of sharing a conversation with us people.

This lady took out a pouch of gold and tossed it. The moment the pouch fell to the floor and gave off a metallic jingle, Humbaba immediately turned her head towards the sound. She embraced the pouch as if it were the loveliest child in the world.

“Your highness’ kindness is immeasurable. Thank you very much. Hehe.”

“I put in half the amount of the promised gold.”

“.....Half-?”

Humbaba froze.

I coldly gazed down at the witch.

“I will give you the remaining half once the task is completely over.”

“That’s a little bit different compared to the promise that this one had heard previously-.....”

“Dantalian had personally wiped the dirt off of you all earlier today, and yet, you all had betrayed that Dantalian. Do I have even the slightest reason to place my trust in you?”

“Mm-, well-, hm-. Ahahah? That’s right. Of course. Your highness is correct.”

Humbaba straightened her cone hat. The witch’s face was no longer visible because of the wide brim of her hat.

“But at least the other promise.....”

“Yes. On a Walpurgis Night, I will petition for every witch that had participated in this war to receive a Leaf Medal. You’ll then be a veteran in possession of a Quadriphyllous. Congratulations.”

“Ahaha. That is a great favor.”

The witch beamed brightly. The medal with a leaf shape on it was proof that an individual had devoted oneself to their kind in a field of war. No matter how many times one were to participate in a civil war between Demon Lords, you were not granted a leaf. As much as our current situation was going to become a massive war against the

humans, it meant that it was going to meet the conditions for the witch before me to be given a leaf.

Regardless, people of the low class were originally unable to receive medals, excluding the extremely rare cases. Despite that, just like they had done now, these witches were able to somehow gain medals through constant repetition of betrayal and trickery. One's honor should be established by one's self and not by relying on others, and yet..... They were a despicable group.

This lady waved her hand.

“I do not wish to see you any further. Get out.”

“My apologies for sullyng your highness’ eyes.”

Humbaba wrapped herself in her cloak and left. Just like she had done when she arrived, her footsteps had no sound while leaving as well. It felt as if she was still somewhere in the quarters because of her noiseless footsteps.

“.....”

This lady silently stared at the pocket watch. The problem now was where I was going to utilize this strong evidence. Unfortunately, it is clear that this video will not have any particular use in bringing the war to a halt. Currently, the person holding the lead position for the advocacy of war was Barbatos. Even if Dantalian were to be accused, Barbatos would heed it no mind and execute the war anyway. However, even if it was unable to stop the war then.....

My worries became deeper along with the night. Thinking about the destiny of the ones born as monarchs, this lady's head became numb. I shared the responsibility in the proclamation of war, and yet, only the lives of the soldiers will be taken away through it. My heart pounded by the thought that no matter what occurred, I will remain alive.

A massive war.

At the very least, a devastating war must be prevented.....

□ The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 2, Day 13
Yotvingian Plains, Demon Lord Allied Forces Garrison

“I heard you personally wiped clean some witches. You crazy bastard!”

Barbatos spoke.

The words shouted after barging in here abruptly during the middle of the night was that.

I put down my fountain pen and sighed.

“Thank you, Lapis. You may leave now.”

“.....”

Lapis, who was helping me throughout the night with documents, left without a word. While Lapis was my woman, I was Barbatos’ man, thus Lapis behaved as if she were invisible while in front of Barbatos, and Barbatos treated Lapis as if she were not there. The distance between Barbatos and Lapis was too vast for them to connect with each other for the reason that they shared the same man. Once Lapis left the tent, I spoke.

“Rumors spread quite fast.”

“I’m here to compliment you. You did well holding back. Ten to one, I’m certain that incident was one of that bitch Paimon’s schemes.”

“Probably. That’s why I endured it.”

“It’s impressive to say you’ll endure it and actually be able to endure it. If it were me, then I would have punched Sitri right in her face.

Dantalian, you're a big shot."

As if something was funny, Barbatos cackled. She was the type of person to not tell people why she was laughing, and I was the bastard who didn't disregard it and made sure to ask what was so funny.

"What's so humorous? Let's laugh together."

"It's hilarious since the upright guy who believes in witches just looks like a retard. Hey, do you want to know something amusing? You know I constantly place agents around that bitch Paimon, right? She's the type of bitch who pretends to be pure and coy while doing everything she wants, after all. If I don't spread observers around her, then sheesh, I can't feel reassured."

Barbatos grinned.

"Well, that bitch probably has agents planted around me as well, but that isn't what's important right now. Do you know who just went into that bitch Paimon's tent?"

"....."

I gazed at Barbatos. Excluding the white candles placed on top of the table, there were no other sources of light in the tent. When the candle light trembled, the shadow covering Barbatos' face shook as well. Regardless of that trembling, Barbatos smiled grimly. I shook my head.

"That isn't possible."

"How innocent. That's cute."

".....Humbaba? Euryale?"

"Who knows? I don't know well enough to know their name. I only know that after leaving that bitch Paimon's tent they disappeared into your camp."

“Give me the evidence.”

Barbatos raised her middle finger.

“Eat shit, Dantalian. I won’t give someone like you evidence. Whether you believe my words or not, that’s something you’ll have to decide on your own. My duties were finished the moment I didn’t turn a blind eye towards this matter.”

After leaving those words, Barbatos left casually. There was no farewell. It was truly like her to not give a refined greeting,

and simply toss aside something that she had started on a whim. I became as awkward as a preschooler who was suddenly faced with a drawing paper that was forcefully given to him because of a teacher’s discretion. How was I going to deal with this?

Betrayal was a social response which occurred when a single contract was not fulfilled adequately. However, I have never infringed on the contract shared between myself and the witches. Although I did not doubt the fact that betrayal was an obvious occurrence in the world, I was suspicious because I believed that a betrayal without reason could not exist. A sudden thought occurred to me. Could this not be a type of signal?

I quietly exited my tent and headed towards the witches’ quarters. The witches had built a large tent for themselves and resided in it together. I wondered if they were controlling the temperature with magic since the inside of their tent was humid despite the blizzard outside. The witches were playing around with each other and entangling their bodies with one another. Even after seeing me enter their tent, the witches did not put on their tops.

“Ara, Master? What brings you here on this night?”

“Did our master finally start to yearn for our blooming bodies and has come to visit us in order to grant us your Royal Grace—?”

The witches giggled. Among them, there were three or four witches

who were pressing against one another and licking the others' skin. A strong flowery fragrance emanated from the air. It was the smell of decadence. Because the fragrance was so thick, I could not distinguish whether I was breathing through my nose or being waterboarded by extracts. The heaven and earth on all four sides were being enveloped by the winter, making the world white, but the witches had separately made this place into a small red-light district.

I clicked my tongue.

"It appears this place isn't a military camp but a licensed quarter instead. Do I have to pay an entrance fee?"

"Of course not. Our master is always welcomed."

"Tsk, these obscene fellows....."

I sat down anywhere that felt convenient. The witch who was suddenly sat on by me let out a playful yelp.

"A yin^[3] and yang should be fusing together in order to form a union, and yet, you girls seem to be in quite the fine state with lewd fellows playing around with other indecent fellows."

"Eeh. Why is our Master being concerned when this isn't the first or second time you've seen us like this?"

"Is there anything that Master had done in order to supplement us for being obscene, disorderly, and slovenly-?"

"Be quiet. You girls are being too bold since you are not even concerned about dying by a sword on a battlefield, but instead, you're preparing to die by coition first. Hurry up and go put on some undergarments. I have something serious to discuss, that is why I have come all the way here myself."

The witches pouted and draped clothes over their shoulders. In truth, it was an outfit that was more befitting to be called cloth than actual clothing. The nape of their necks were wide open and their

chests were completely revealed. Seeing that they were exposing themselves while in my presence, it was clear that they were trying to tease me. I didn't feel like reprimanding them any further, so I let it be.

The witches adjusted their clothes slowly. They seemed to think that if they did that, then I would turn into an animal of passion and pounce at them. Seeing their ridiculous behavior, I let out a snort, and once I did so, the witches grumbled with a face that displayed discontent. At any rate, these fellows did not know their limit.

I gazed at Humbaba who posed as the leader of the witches.

“Is there any inconvenience while residing in the camp?”

“We are endowed with both something to eat and a place to sleep, so something like inconvenience couldn't possibly exist-.”

“I am worried since you all used to be abused commonly. Are there no vulgar fellows who mistreat or beat you?”

“Yes. The people who abuse us are normally nobles, but as your lordship already knows, there are no nobles in your camp, and even if there are, only minor nobles who stink of piss on the family tree are present-.....”

The witches' complexions gradually became darker.

There was no chance that their lord would come pay them a visit past midnight just to inquire them of their well-being. There was a sequence in conversations, so a ground must be spread out first. However, since the ground kept being set down, the witches were worried about what sort of talk was going to come next. Once I closed my mouth, the tent became silent. The quarters was still humid, yet it was no longer a pleasurable warmth but just plain heat instead. I spoke.

“I heard that you girls betrayed me. Why did you do it?”

“.....”

“I do not wish to quibble over the improperness of you all and the information given. Tell me the reason behind the betrayal.”

Over the tent, the sound of an owl hooting could be heard. The witches' tent was thin so the sound of the bird felt nearby. It was forbidden for witches to wear or use the leather of animals. That was the law in the demon world. The tent was made completely out of cotton. Once the owl's hooting ceased, Humbaba spoke.

“This one shall atone for the crime with her death.”

“I asked for the reason of betrayal. Would I not need to know something before being able to determine whether if I am to accept your apology or not? There would be no meaning if you were to die on your own.”

“We craved money—.”

“Money? If you desired for money, then you could have asked me, could you have not? You all should know well that I possess so much money that it is nearly unmanageable.”

“As there is nothing more terrifying than free money, it is also uncongenial to us. Rather, doing spy work is more efficient and clean.”

“Oh, these imbeciles.”

I placed my hand on my forehead. My brain started to hurt.

I understood that since these witches lived their entire lives being scorned by the other races, the only place they could put their trust into was money. People did not consider the act of breaking a promise with low-class individuals as shameful. As long as it was not a business relationship, betrayal was a peasant's destined fate. It was heartrending to see these girl use their destiny as an excuse.

“And so? Did you get some money?”

“Nope. We only got half the promised amount–.”

“What?After having betrayed me, you were embezzled half the amount?”

I was taken aback.

“Dear God. I already knew that you all were imbeciles but I did not consider you would also be a bunch of pushovers. If you’re going to stab someone in the back, then do it properly. Just what are you doing?”

“We heard that Miss Paimon was kind towards even peasants, so we were a bit hopeful. But it turned out that she was less kind than the rumors. Ahahaha.”

“You’re laughing? Does laughter really come out right now?”

The witches’ shoulders trembled.

I pressed them for answers in order to find out what information they had sold. ‘No, it’s nothing big. It really is nothing’, and the crime which Humbaba confessed ended up belonging to the category of being something big. After hearing the truth that they had passed over the entire process of retrieving Farnese and the process of ordering the slaughter to Paimon, I grabbed the back of my neck. When I asked them how much money they were supposed to receive, they responded with 3,000 gold. Since they had lost half of that, they were barely able to get 1,500 gold after having sold me out.

How maddening.

The sight of a mantle hanging on a clothesline within the tent came into my vision. It was the black mantle that I had gifted to Humbaba yesterday. All of the dirty stains were gone and the mantle was dried stiff, which made me wonder if they had washed it with the snow outside. It seemed that to the witches, the sincerity of washing the

piece of clothing that I had given them and the lighthearted act of betraying me for money, easily coexisted together.

The amusement on the witches' faces was gone. I was able to see the witches with an emotionless face for the first time. That did not appear awkward to them at all. People who were always smiling were supposed to be people with a reason to constantly smile, but the very fact that they had to constantly laugh was not that humorous to them. That was the reason.

I spoke as if I was letting out a sigh.

“Girls, politics misbecome you. The Demon Lords and I are currently moving behind the scenes, and if a bunch of girls as pure as you all were to try and squeeze in, then you will only be injured greatly. Since you all have gone against the military order, you must pay the penalty.”

“.....”

“Bring a cutting board. I will cut a single finger from all of you.”

One by one, I sliced off a finger from the witches with my dagger. It was the same dagger that I had used to commit my first murder after having fallen into this world, the blade that had killed Andromalius.

When the ring finger on their left hand was being severed off, the witches did not appear as if they felt any particular pain. A sense of pain and mind that should have fallen along with their ring finger did not exist in the witches. While cutting their fingers, I spoke.

“Since your lifespans are long, you will one day meet your life-long partner. Even if that life-long partner were to confess their love and propose to you, you now no longer have the finger to put a ring on. You are forever crippled. Repent in dust and ashes for the foolishness of not having cherished a bond and having hastily betrayed it. You will understand this feeling when you meet the one you love.”

“.....Master.”

“Come find me when the day is bright. I shall give you the rest of the gold which you were unable to receive.”

I wiped the dagger with the edge of my coat and left the quarters. Once I returned to my own tent, Lapis was arranging the bedding. Through some method, Lapis had listened in on the conversation shared between myself and the witches, so she knew everything.

“5 points, your highness. The penalty was excessively weak. It would be better off to have killed them.”

“They got caught on purpose.”

“Pardon?”

I lifted an alcohol bottle and drank straight from it.

“Would witches who have lived for over 200 years be that naive? They clearly know that Barbatos is intimate with me, so if they were to do spy work, then they would have behaved more carefully. Despite that, did they not go back and forth from my and Paimon’s encampment without any disguise whatsoever?”

Lapis supported her chin with her hand.

“Is your highness saying that the witches had betrayed your highness on purpose in order to get caught? This one does not understand. What benefit could they possibly gain from doing so?”

“It’s a test. They were testing to see whether if I am truly a good person to depend on or not.”

“A test.....”

“They must have felt anxious since I have been constantly treating them with kindness. They wanted to believe and devote their loyalty to me, but they were unable to because they were uncertain whether

if I would cherish them or not. That is why they tested me. If need be, they may have harbored the idea of jumping ship and joining Paimon's side.....”

It seems Lapis was half in doubt after having heard my words.

Once dawn arrived, the witches came. Since they did not have the heart to enter my quarters, the witches were kneeling on the snow outside. Once I stepped out of my tent, the 11 sisters lowered their bare bodies on the snow. They were not wearing clothes.

On the witches' pure white backs, permanent scars remained. Whip marks, scald marks from past tortures, and wounds that were healed then injured again until the scars remained fully intact, these injuries lingered on their bodies. Each witch, who was wearing nothing, had a necklace around their neck and hanging from that necklace was the ring finger that I had cut.

Humbaba lowered her forehead to the ground.

“Us Berbere Sisters, born without a home, raised in the back alleys of towns and villages, and individuals who have spent our lives as mercenaries for decades and centuries, wish to now forget our pasts and find value in our lives as solely Demon Lord Dantalian's followers. Our hearts, our heads, our souls will forever be a part of your highness' possessions. Therefore, your highness, please take care of our lost hearts, heads, and souls.”

An oath of fealty.

When nobles pledge their fealty, they devoted their hearts, a commoner devoted both their hearts and heads, and peasants devoted everything up to even their souls.

I brought out all of the mantles that I possessed and put them on each and every one of them. The witches earnestly adjusted their black mantles. I placed my forehead against Humbaba's forehead.

“I vow, that I, Dantalian, shall never return thy advice with silence,

and shall never return thy suggestions with scorn. If thou art to sweat and bleed for my behalf, then I shall repay thee the exact weight for every drop of sweat and blood.”

The Berbere Sisters have been recruited as
subordinates.

The degree of loyalty will appear in the witches’
statuses.

A complete and firm allegiance. The other party
regards you as their one and only lord.

They will not betray you as long as you do not betray
them first.



By accepting these girls, it was the same as acknowledging that even witches had souls.

The witches sobbed into the snow. They weren't tears shed for me, but for themselves. They sat kneeling within the fluttering snow for a long period of time. I brushed off the snow that fell onto their heads with my hand.



On this day, the Demon Lord Allied Forces' strategy was ultimately decided.

First Army. Rank 8th, **Barbatos**

Advance with the Plains Faction and 21,000 soldiers under her command.

Second Army. Rank 5th, **Marbas**.

Advance with the Neutral Faction and 15,000 soldiers under his command.

Third Army. Rank 9th, **Paimon**

Advance with the Mountain Faction and 13,000 soldiers under her command.

Although the lineup of armies reached up to the Sixth Army, the armies written on the paper were only these. The rank 1st, Great Demon Lord Baal led the Sixth Army, but Baal did not lead an army to meet with us here. There were around 30 other Demon Lords who

were also like that.

In other words, this was our entire army.

The dignity of the Demon Lord Allied Forces, which had at one time led a massive army of over 100,000 soldiers throughout the plains, had descended this far. Although no one would admit it, everyone already knew. That the era of Demon Lords was over.

The humans had slowly succeeded in a centralized authoritarian rule, and in this era where kingdoms and empires were being built up upon, the demons were still being managed by villages and clans. The demons pointed at the humans and looked down at them, referring to them as tamed livestock, however, the reality was the complete opposite. The Demons were miserable beasts that weren't even able to be tamed.

This age has already become dark. The majority of the continent was occupied by the humans. The demons could either wither away while being surrounded by the humans or entrust their bodies on a hopeless final war. Either way, it was suicide.

Paimon, who suggested that we should huddle up since there was no hope in winning a war, or Barbatos who declared that there wouldn't be a chance for survival if we were to stay docile so a war must be waged. They were nothing more than pioneers who had smelt the scent of annihilation and had become desperate.

Barbatos who shouted for dispatch, claiming that this was the golden opportunity given to us by the heavens since the humans were being exterminated by the Black Death spreading throughout the continent. Or Paimon, who warned everyone that there would be no end in a war initiated while believing not in the strength of our own army, but in the weakness of the enemies, so once war is commenced, it cannot be taken back. There seemed to be no elucidation in throwing open the doors to a new age.

In an era with no clarity, Barbatos discussed the duty of a monarch who had to lead their subjects, and Paimon conferred the fate of a

monarch who had to fall with their subjects. Even if they followed their duty or accepted their fate, the thing to be thrown away was the lives of the people. Whether it was better to offer one's life to one's task, or to throw away one's life by following one's destiny, neither Barbatos nor Paimon could answer that question. It was an unanswerable question. In order to find the path which contained the answer, the Demon Lords led lives down their respective paths.

Barbatos went south. The ground was flat and vast in the southern region. It was easy to both lead an army through and transport provisions. It was also simple for battles to occur. It seemed Barbatos was searching for her path on the endlessly stretched out horizon. However, Barbatos most likely did not know what would be waiting for her past the horizon. She was not a monarch that questioned the end, but was simply a monarch that walked down the path.

Paimon went west. The mountain terrain was perilous in the west. It was difficult to both lead an army through and move provisions. It seemed Paimon was going to seek for her path after having gotten out of the rugged mountain range. However, it was clear that after Paimon escaped from the mountains, she would be unsure which direction to take. She was a monarch that searched for the end of the path, but got lost on the way.

And I obliquely traversed between the south and west.

The south-west was an easy and difficult route to pass through. It was a location where a single mountain range huddled down and another mountain range spread out. A path was placed between where the mountains ended and the mountains began. Once you've gotten past the narrow passage, you would immediately be in the heart of the human empire. It was a short path.

Even the humans knew full well of the shortness of this route. The humans built fortresses within the gap between the mountains. The fortresses blocked the ascending path by two layers. If one planned to cross over the mountain pass, which was neither plains nor mountains, one had to go through 2 strongholds. It was a short but

difficult path. However, what lied waiting ahead past the mountain pass was definite, and where to go after making one's way through was also clear.

The meeting was over. It was already the middle of the night when I had left the tent.

The moonlight was clear and permeated into the snowy fields. The night sky and snowy fields embraced the lunar rays and illuminated the distant mountains like twilight. The mountains were at the end of the field.

I tried to fathom why Hannibal had gazed at the Alps and tried to search for a path in an area that was not a path. The passage shall end at the end of the mountains and another path shall spread out before one afterwards. Hannibal most likely saw it as the end of an era and the start of a new age.

“Your highness.”

“Lord.”

“Master.”

Lapis, Farnese, and the witches approached my side. Seeing that I did not respond to their call, they followed my gaze and stared at the night sky.

The eyes of the girls who were born and raised in a dark place were well adapted to the night and could see far out. To us, the night was more cozy and relaxing than the morning.

Finally, the witches knelt down first, Farnese bowed, and Lapis lowered her head.

Lapis then asked.

“Your highness, where are we going?”

While looking at the mountains, I spoke.

“To the Empire.”

Translator's Notes

1. [↑↑] Politunia has been changed to Polish-Lithuanian.
2. [↑↑] Changed the way the witches referred to Dantalian to 'Master'. The raw word used can be translated to both 'Lord' and 'Master', but after reading Volume 3, it seems 'Master' would be more appropriate.
3. [↑↑] Yin^[Female Energy], lewd, and indecent all start with the same first letter. So he's referring to the witches as them being both obscene and getting along with only other women.
4. Also, this is an important note, the way Humbaba speaks is rather unique since she drags out the vowel sound of the last word she says. That's why you'll see a '-' at the end of her lines occasionally. She does it on and off depending on the situation. I forgot to do this in previous chapters, but I will make sure to do it from now on.

Chapter Three

The Mountain Range is Burning

▯ **The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian**
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 2, Day 25
The Black Mountains, Black Fortress vicinity

For several days the fog was severe. The soldiers were afraid to advance through a place where nothing could be seen. The Gods are not allowing our passage.....these words were spoken in whispers. We unpacked our gear near the mountain range. Lapis spoke.

“Your highness. This location is a renowned shrine and numinous mountain in the demon world, so it would only be appropriate to perform an ancestral rite to the Gods here.”

“Would it truly be right to perform a memorial service in the middle of a war?”

“There are many soldiers who entrust their psyche to the Gods. Console the bodies and minds of the soldiers, your highness.”

“Minds, huh.....?”

I scratched my forehead.

“It’s bothersome since it feels like it may become a needless pretense. Omit the ceremony and only set the food for the ancestral rites. Do not gather the troops into one spot and regulate them inconveniently. Instead, be considerate and allow the soldiers to offer their prayers whenever they desire. Inform the soldiers that while my intention is to show respect to the Gods, I shall not submit to them. If they depend on the Gods with their minds, then during the times they are unable to see their so-called Gods, their minds will collapse.”

“This one will pass your highness’ command to Miss Farnese and it shall reach the captains from there.”

Lapis handled the matter rapidly. It seems she had already taken care of the preparations for an ancestral rite before we had embarked on our march.

The soldiers steamed white soybeans, ground it, and made it into soup. They then pulled out wheat and turned it into noodles. They were making chilled soy milk noodle soup. Demons believed that if they consumed white soy milk noodle soup while performing an ancestral rite, then their insides would become clear and their spirits would be cleansed. The less salty it tasted, the better it was as food for memorial ceremonies. The soldiers ate the bean soup noodles and prayed to the Goddesses. Following us, the peddlers and prostitutes also made noodles of their own. After having a taste of the bowl that was presented to me, the taste of the soup was pleasurable. A servant had chopped cucumbers and modestly placed it above the noodles, which made me wonder where they could have possibly acquired the cucumbers during this winter season. The servants believed the act of obtaining cucumbers and offering them to me contained their sincerity, so they were quite proud of themselves for it. It’s a relief that there were cucumbers.....was what the servants said while beaming immaculately. The soy milk noodle soup was simple and clean. It felt like my internal organs were becoming clear. I experienced for the first time in my life the devotion towards ancestral rites, which I did not experience before, here in this world.

“With this, is the service over?”

Lapis responded.

“It would be better to capture a white horse from a good descent and drain its blood and then boil that clotted blood to consume. However, since there are centaurs participating in the war as our cavalry, we cannot sacrifice a horse.”

“Hm.”

Centaurs were demons with the upper bodies of humans and the lower bodies of horses. For a race of demons with handsome faces, their tool on their lower body was as large as a horse as well, so honestly, they were a cheat-like race. If we were to capture and drain the blood of an animal who had the same looking penis as they did, then certainly the centaurs would loathe the idea.

“I see your consideration is deep, Lapis.”

“It would also be fine to boil the clotted blood of dogs instead of a horse. Your highness, would it be better to capture the hunting dogs?”

“That is fine. Although it may be different if it was duck blood, clotted dog blood most likely would not taste good at all. Rather than that, this chilled soy milk noodles is refreshing. Let’s have this again later on.”

“If we pillage the human villages then we will be able to obtain something like soybeans as much as we desire. If your highness so wishes, then this one will prepare the dish for your highness even if it is not during an occasion such as an ancestral rite.”

“You’re terrifyingly bad at making food, so that kind of lip service is.....”

“Could this one’s cooking be as disgusting as Your Highness’?”

“What, how could you call it disgusting?”

Although those words weren’t necessarily wrong, that was still going too far. It seemed Lapis also thought her comment was a bit harsh and fixed her words.

“That was a slip of the tongue. This one apologizes. Your Highness’ handmade food is not disgusting, but rather, it is poor.”

“If you’re saying that as a compliment, then you are also quite the mystery.”

My lover is truly a weird woman.

Referentially, Farnese's cooking ability was also completely non-existent.

We all grew up eating the food made by others or the food we had picked up, which could not be dared to be called cooking, so the lord and his vassals were all pitiful. How fellows, who have never made themselves a proper meal in their entire lives, could walk forward while trying to go to war, was a mystery. If it was a farce, then it was a comedy. With these pitiable fellows gathered together, they discussed military operations.

The captains disputed on the difficulty of the siege.

— Your highness. The Black and White Strongholds are impregnable fortresses that have been penetrated only 6 times in the past 1,000 years. Moreover, is the general protecting the rampart not the human from the House of Rosenberg? That House has had great commanders for generations.

— There was also a case where the stronghold did not fall despite the mobilization of 40,000 troops, but our current military strength is merely 4,000. A siege would be incredibly difficult.

I took out my pipe and bit down on it.

“Do you think I came here unaware of the difficulty of this path? Would the castle gates open if we were to have another history lesson after having come this far? Put aside the things that are needless to say. I wish to hear your stratagems. Even if you are to make a foolish utterance, I will not punish you by military law, so do not worry. However, keep in mind that the keep you earn is a lot higher than you think. You will have to be brighter in strategy than a foolish lumberjack. If not, then, well.....blood will flow from your necks.”

The captains gulped.

— That is, well. Although the enemy forces are relying on the rugged mountain terrain, it'll be difficult for them to receive supplies because of that terrain. It would be fine for our troops to hold position on this vast field and relax, but the enemy soldiers will have to go on patrols frequently, furthermore, the walls are high so it'll also be that cold.....

I spat on the floor.

“Oho? Are you saying that we should wait patiently until the enemy forces run out of provisions? That is quite the splendid strategy and marvelous tactic. To be able to welcome an imperishable great commander such as yourself, my insides are trembling. Come here.”

I gestured for him to approach me with my finger. Following my instructions, the captain prostrated. I raised my bare feet on top of the captain's back and declared sternly.

“Until this meeting ends, you'll be my foot rest.”

The dwarven captain was close to tears.

— Your Highness' Royal Grace is immeasurable—.....

Since a full grown dwarf was sniffing, there was nothing as extremely disgraceful as this sound of whimpers. The remaining captains could not dare to laugh, so only the edges of their mouths twitched. I glared at the captains.

“Listen carefully. Though the enemy's fortress may be located on a

rough mountain terrain, their back entrance is wide open. Their back gate is connected to the White Fortress, and the White Fortress is connected to the Empire,

so there are no chances of their supply line being cut. I understand that you feel reluctant about performing a siege, but use your brains a bit, your brains.”

The captains glanced at each other.

— How about turning the witches into a detached force and assaulting the enemy supply lines? It will most likely be an effective attack.

— Although our infantry and cavalry may be nothing more than a total of 4,000 men, the number of witches we have is 50. Normally, an army that reached 30,000 soldiers would have around 50 witches, so our numbers may be small, but we are still a strong force. Please make active use of the witches. If our forces block the front gate of the fortress while the witches cut off the back path, the enemy troops inside the stronghold will be unable to move anywhere and lose morale.

I was in awe.

“It is quite beautiful to see fellows, who claim to be warriors, pass on all their duties to the witches. I should have utilized the money I spent on hiring you chaps to just acquire more witches instead, but it seems I had ended up doing something foolish. There is not a complete lack of logic in your words. However, do you think that a stronghold known as the front line which protects the humankind would not have any supplies in their reserve? No matter how little their supplies may be inside that fortress, it should be enough to keep their forces fed for 2 months, so what would we do during that time? If it is 2 months, then the enemy could easily organize auxiliary

troops from the rear, however, we do not have any reinforcements, so what can we do? By the looks of it, it also seems like there are no brains inside those heads of yours, so what can we do about that as well?"

I beckoned to them.

"Come here."

The captains approached. The two captains laid on top of each other like a hamburger. Using those idiots as a chair, I sat on top of them. The captains groaned and endured the sensation of my sexy derriere.

"If you have no better plans, then just get on your knees. I will at least uphold the dignity of those who kneel down honestly."

Thud

All of the military officers gathered in the tent had lowered their bodies at once.

Were these not dubious fellows?

Solely Farnese kept her back straight. Even during a meeting, Farnese had a book open. The fingers clinging to the cover of the book were being brushed by the cold wind, so they had turned red.

"....."

Every time she flipped a page of her book with her cold hands, the air around the tent was emaciated by the sound of the paper. The captains and I watched Farnese as she flipped one page at a time. Farnese spoke frankly.

"Just rush in. There are no enemy troops in the Black Fortress."

The captains glanced at each other with a doubtful gaze. I asked.

"Why would there be no one protecting the stronghold?"

“Margrave Rosenberg is a coward. Since it seems like it will be impossible to protect both, he will try to at least defend the other half. That is the fate of an old general. The margrave most likely does not have the military strength to protect both the Black and White Fortresses. He would want to hold the White Fortress at any cost.....”

Farnese let out a yawn. Her words were indifferent so it was similar to the way she was flipping the leaves of her book, and it was lightly passed by like the pages being turned. I thought about the child who was unable to learn how to speak from people and had no other choice but to learn from books. I spoke.

“What makes you say that the military troops the margrave would have brought here are a few?”

“There are several reasons. Those multiple reasons would have fused into one. The margrave most likely wants to achieve vengeance against your highness while relying solely on his own powers. A foolish fellow.”

Farnese let out a dried breath. In the previous battle, the margrave’s troops were all slaughtered after having been deceived by us. Farnese was referring to the vengeance that had blinded him because of that.

“There is also a political reason. The margrave is the starting point of this war. By attacking your lordship, he presented the demons a justification to start a war. The humans who were swallowed up by this abrupt battle will most likely abhor the margrave.....”

“So cleaning up after one’s own mess.”

“The margrave himself should be thinking along these lines, so he should feel pressured.”

I nodded.

Margrave Rosenberg was the supreme commander of the northern region of the Empire. Despite that, what was the margrave doing? He

had come to this location in order to block me, Dantalian, who was leading an army that barely reached 4,000 soldiers. In contrast, the Imperial Princess Elizabeth went to face Barbatos and Marbas. The roles were reversed.

There was only one conclusion. Although Margrave Rosenberg was the supreme commander, his position was endangered. The nobles did not follow him easily since they treated him with loathing. There may have been complaints from people questioning how the culprit behind the start of this war could go around acting like a general.

That was the reason. That was why the margrave was here. To achieve vengeance against me and reestablish his sullied reputation. A foolish fellow..... the words Farnese muttered were correct. Georg von Rosenberg was a fool.

“Therefore, Lord, be at ease and rush straight in. The Margrave most likely wishes to bring us in as deep as possible. The Margrave is aiming for the desperate measures of giving us the Black Fortress and luring us all the way to the White Fortress.”

“And you’re planning to go along with that plan, general?”

“The most dim-witted fish bites the bait and is caught by the hook. A slightly less dim-witted fish looks at the bait but disregards it and swims off. A wise fish bites only the bait while avoiding the hook, and escapes leisurely.”

Thud

Farnese closed the book she was reading. She gazed at me.

“However, this young lady is not a fish but a single shark. I shall drag the margrave in, hook and all, and tear him to pieces. Lord, leave your life to this young lady. This young lady shall offer the lives of thousands to your lordship.”

I nodded my head.

“Do as you wish.”

“This young lady shall carry out the task for only your lordship.”

The first stone was placed on the Go board.

□ The Northern Guardian, Margrave of Rosenberg, Georg von Rosenberg
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 2, Day 25
The Black Mountains, White Fortress

“An urgent report from the Black Fortress! The stronghold was captured!”

The conference room froze because of the messenger’s report.

The captains glanced at each other with an anxious gaze. Only I was silently looking down at the Go board. Since the Black Fortress falling was such an obvious occurrence, there was no reason for myself to panic. I scolded them in a mock-serious manner.

“Oi, where’d my Go opponent disappear off to?”

“Ah. Yes, general.”

The captain hastily picked up his stone piece once more. Regardless, there was no sharp flavor. This is why youngsters these days..... Did they not know how to maintain their composure?

From start to finish, the captain was dragged around by me. Black and white stones were mixed together disorderly. The result was his defeat by a large margin. After obtaining my overwhelming victory, I spoke.

“It seems you lost because you panicked, and you are upset since you have lost.”

“Yes.....”

“Do not be perplexed, gentlemen. The number of guards that were posted at the Black Fortress was at most 200. Is that not the fall of

something that was already destined to fall? Do you not gain victory by getting rid of the stone piece that is necessary to sacrifice? If you try to protect everything, then you will lose it all instead. That is the same for war or Go. Keep this in mind.”

“Yes, general.”

The captains bowed their heads. The very sight of them lowering their heads was docile. How troublesome. These young’uns still lacked much vigor. In the past, I used to beat the commanders around and..... no, wait. Am I perhaps old now? Have I become an obstinate old man that showed dissatisfaction towards everything around myself? That could be a possibility. I started having very mixed emotions. One becomes senseless with age, huh? I should pass on quickly..... Except, that will be after I have killed Demon Lord Dantalian.

“Messenger. What were the enemy numbers? With what method did Demon Lord Dantalian capture the Black Fortress? Tell me everything you know.”

“General, the fog is so dense that nothing is visible. Other than the fact that the snowy fog is immensely thick, nothing else could be known. It felt like the enemy had about 2,000 soldiers, but it also felt like they had 4,000. However, it most certainly wasn’t 1,000 or 5,000. Regardless, it truly is difficult to be positive because of the fog. I heard the sound of gunpowder exploding in the distance and then the enemy forces invaded. Of course, the words that the enemy forces invaded is also uncertain since this one did not witness it personally.”

While being aghast, I muttered.

“I do not know who chose you as the messenger, but you truly are a splendid one.”

As if feeling much obliged, the messenger bowed his head.

“Thank you very much. This is the first time I have received such a compliment.”

“Speak honestly. After hearing that you were unable to see anything, I have become suspicious on whether you had actually run away as soon as the fight started. Did you flee?”

“This humble one has an old mother back home, whom I am taking care of by myself, so I felt as if I shouldn’t die thoughtlessly.....”

“Take him away to be lashed.”

The soldiers grabbed the messenger and left. The courier cried out, ‘General, General...!’, but of course, I did not pay him any mind. In the middle of the second round of Go against a captain, another messenger ran in and prostrated himself.

“An urgent report from the Black Fortress! The stronghold has been captured!”

“I already know, courier. Their numbers and through what method the fortress was captured, tell me everything you know.

The courier then exaggerated fluently.

“Yes. The enemy forces were as terrifying as the revival of an ancient demon. The armies that appeared through the snowy fog all consisted of trolls and ogres, which made it feel like giants were approaching us. While the soldiers on our side were scared out of their wits, a dragon flew at us and breathed fire. Although our forces struggled desperately, our military strength was at too much of a disadvantage so they were unable to hold on for even a moment and were defeated.”

After hearing the messenger’s words, the captains whispered to one another.

“If that’s true, then I think we should withdraw as well.”

“Even if we retreat, the dragon will catch up to us and we’ll be turned into grilled meat, so we should just sit here and die.”

“It’s more of a mythical scenery than a terrifying one, and it’s more of a fake scenery than a mythical one.”

“.....”

I had a splitting headache.

“.....You imbecile. State truthfully. Are you saying all that right now after having actually seen it, or are you blabbering after having seen a delusion? Dragons have been extinct for centuries now, but through what method could Demon Lord Dantalian have possibly used to bring one here?”

The courier furrowed his brows.

“Honestly, when the fortress was assaulted, this one was taking a nap in the barracks so even I am uncertain on whether the things I had witnessed were reality or a delusion.”

“Are you interpreting your dream right now in this stern military affair? And are you also claiming that dream as your report?”

“Since this one believes it is true, this one does not think that it is too much of a hallucination. Referentially, is a person’s belief not what forms that person’s world? Because I believe that I have seen a dragon, then that dragon must exist.”

“This man. So if I were to believe that you are soon destined to die, then I guess you will indeed die shortly after.”

“Uh.....”

The courier tilted his head.

“Although that seems logically correct, something seems wrong.”

“The thing that is wrong is your head.”

I snarled.

“Someone drag this fool away and punish him.”

The soldiers lifted the messenger up and dragged him out. The sound of someone being clubbed could be heard in the distance. While I was concentrating on the Go board and placing my stone down, the third messenger rushed in. The messenger knelt down as soon as he entered the meeting room.

“General!”

“.....I will have no expectations so just speak however you want. However, it would probably be better to say nothing at all instead of speaking whatever you desire.”

“General—!”

From beginning to end, the courier shouted.

“The Black Fortress has fallen by the heinous demons of the enemy forces! Our troops had lowered their guards because they thought the enemy wouldn’t invade due to the fog, but they aimed for that carelessness! The enemy forces put a bit over 20 witches in the front and bombarded our walls, and while our soldiers were running about in confusion, the enemy troops climbed up the walls. Several of our men struggled, but the majority had run away. Furthermore, among the ones that had fled, most of them were unable to escape completely and were captured. General! The enemy infantry consisted purely of dwarves and their numbers were approximately 3,000 to 4,000 men, but their morale seemed to be high and they were all well equipped!”

Once finished with his report, the messenger lowered his head. It was truly a clean movement. The captains lowered their voices and muttered to each other.

“.....That’s strange. That fellow clearly gave a proper report, but for some reason, it sounds like a lie.”

“The so-called Shepherd’s Law. If the first two tell a lie, then no

matter how sincerely the third states the truth, it'll seem like a lie. That's why, while it's important for a person to be sincere, they must also be first, or at the very least second. This is important as well."

"I have never heard of a law with that kind of name in my entire life. Are you sure that's not some law that you randomly made up?"

"Hey, don't accuse an innocent person....."

These guys, I told them to not panic and ease their tensions, but it seems that they have let their entire heads go.

I let out a sigh and spoke.

"Gentlemen, listen well. According to the reports from our scouts, the enemy army has about 3,000 to 4,000 soldiers. This location is absolutely not the main effort of the Demon Lord Allied Forces. Their goal is to grab our attention with the use of a separate attack unit. Do not be disturbed, and do not be blinded."

"Yes, general."

The captains courteously lowered their heads. I continued.

"Gentlemen, personally patrol the walls and reassure our military personnel. Our men are frigid because of the weather, so their hands should be cold. Switch their duty rotations frequently, and prepare hot water within the quarters regularly."

The Black Fortress was captured, but what about it? There was no problem in the strategy I had planned out. If anything, it would be fine to judge that everything was going smoothly. I contemplated while preparing to write a report.

Demon Lord Dantalian will now pass the Black Fortress and advance further into the mountain pass. Their supply line will lengthen in consonance with that. Additionally, forests were luxuriantly spread out on both sides of the road. The optimum location to hide an ambush. If they were to try and invade

thoughtlessly, then most certainly, the ones to die will be on the Demon Lord's side.

This mountain passage was like a Go board. The Black Fortress was the upper side while the White Fortress was the lower side, and the entire mountain pass was spread out as the face of the battlefield. A single line of a stronghold rampart was merely increased by another line, and yet the battlefield was expanded to a high and low. Surely, the ancestors who had built these walls in this location must have had foresight.

.....The thing that I am worried about was not our front. There were no problems ahead of us.

If anything, the complication was behind us. Whether the Imperial Princess Elizabeth was going to properly provide us with supplies or not.....

His Majesty the Emperor had appointed me as the supreme commander of the northern armies. However, the nobles of the Empire had sworn their loyalty to the Imperial Princess. There was no prestige or dignity from the certificate of appointment given by the Emperor. It was a tragedy.

The Imperial Princess considered me as a nuisance. There was more than enough of a possibility for the supplies to be delayed. I had to obstruct the Demon Lord in front of me, and at the same time, I had to keep in check the Imperial Princess behind me. For myself to be in a war where I was surrounded on both fronts, just how did it become like this.

I recalled the words the Imperial Princess had spoken to me.

— Sir Rosenberg, do you not think that the majority of the conversations we have shared can be condensed into more simple terms?

— Habsburg grants their faith a single time.

“.....”

The image of the Imperial Princess, peeling off the skin of an alligator, filled my mind. A cold sweat went down the back of my neck. Being careless with the Imperial Princess was not an option.

From now on, the Imperial Princess will most likely gain complete control of the authority in the Empire. The thought of submitting to the Imperial Princess in order to establish a livelihood and the thought of refusing to bow to the Imperial Princess since my body had already pledged fidelity to His Majesty the Emperor, clashed against one another. The former rigorously encouraged one's livelihood, while the latter solemnly advised loyalty. I was more concerned about the home front that was glaring at us from behind than the enemy forces that were approaching us from ahead.

Our great ancestors had raised two sets of walls and given us humans freedom, however, it felt like all the liberty in the world was the freedom of the enemy and the freedom of the Imperial Princess. That was so. This place was where I was going to be laid to rest. By breaking through this location with my bare body, was when I will finally be able to survive with my life.

“Mm.”

I gulped. With the sick sensation that felt as if something was caught in my throat, I wrote the report.

— 2nd month, 25th day. Enemy forces have captured the Black Fortress. Military strength approximately 3,000. The commander is Demon Lord Dantalian. Our forces are stationed in the White Fortress and are perfectly secured. We are abundant in provisions and have a sufficient number of arms. The fog is severe.

And then, with the intention of warning the Imperial Princess, I added another line.

— The mountains are safe.

.....Good. Even the Imperial Princess should be able to understand with this.

After passing the report to the postrider, I gazed outside the window. The Demon Lord will advance through the mountain pass covered in pure white snow.

Come, Dantalian. Come quickly. I shall sever your neck and satisfy my grudge.....

▯ **The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian**
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 2, Day 25
The Black Mountains, Black Fortress

Our forces had occupied the Black Fortress before a period of having a single meal. Farnese was right. There were barely any troops within the stronghold.

It was barely 200. The majority of them were captured as prisoners. Claiming that this was too insipid, Humbaba complained.

“Tsk—. I thought we were going to be able to smell some blood after such a long time, but we drew a blank. Why did those shitty humans surrender after barely even fighting—?”

“Are you bored since you were unable to fight intensely?”

“A frustrating feeling like feeling—?”

Humbaba pouted her lips. I responded.

“Then burn them.”

“Yes—?”

“Do we not have a lot more than 100 prisoners? Bring the other witches and take 50 prisoners to burn as you desire. The most entertaining scenery in the world is watching fire, so your stress should dissipate a bit.”

Humbaba tilted her head.

“.....But they’re nice enemy soldiers who surrendered obediently—?”

“Since they gave up obediently, then I guess they will die obediently as well.”

“.....I don't really know if that's okay—?”

“I plan to go and greet the margrave tomorrow.”

I picked up some snow that was mixed with mud and tossed it in my mouth. I scrutinized the unpleasant taste of the dirt and the fishy smell of the snow with my tongue. Despite being considered as a renowned shrine and numinous mountain among the demons, the dirt and snow did not have any distinct taste in particular. I spat the mud out.

“In the past, since the margrave had come and gone from my stone cavern, we had become acquainted. Now, since I have arrived at the margrave's stone walls, it is only natural for me to give him my greeting. However, it seems I regrettably do not have a present to give him.”

“.....”

“I feel as if 40 heads should be roughly enough to express my sincerity. What do you think, Humbaba?”

“—Ahahah.”

Humbaba twisted the corners of her lips. Ahah, ahahah.....
Humbaba put her cone hat securely on her head and laughed flatly. The pitch black brim of her hat covered Humbaba's face.

“Really, our master knows his stuff.”

“Burn them earnestly.”

“Oh. Us witches are the greatest experts in burning people to death. A person who has eaten a lot of meat knows well, and people who have had their flesh singed a lot can also burn things well. You'll be stifled, master. It'll be fine if you look forward to it—.”

The humans were set ablaze while they were still alive.

While looking down at their bodies burning from their leg up, the humans screamed. It was a wail that was like they were vomiting out their twisted intestines. We hung the corpses that were burnt pitch black on the ramparts. Similar to their last cries, their corpses were twisted bizarrely as well.

The witches devised a game. It was a sport to throw stones and hit the corpses. 1 point if you hit the body, 2 points if you hit the head, and 3 points if you hit their balls. Players who hit the balls three times in a row were gifted 10 extra points. The witches under my command were geniuses.

Farnese and I watched the humans burn and their bodies being played with. The sound of the witches' giggling echoed throughout the area. The smoke blackened the corpses and the white snowy fog mixed into it. That side of the fog, where the whereabouts of the smoke disappeared, suddenly felt like nirvana. Once the laughter of the witches stopped, Farnese spoke.

“Lord. Do you perhaps know which army had captured the Black Fortress the fastest in the entirety of history?”

“I am not interested in history, so I do not know that well.”

“The answer is the revolting army of the Habsburg Empire. After starting a rebellion in the northern region, they assaulted the Black Fortress from behind. They say it took them 15 days to capture the stronghold, and this was an enduring record that was unable to be broken for the past 313 years.”

“Hmm.”

“When your lordship brought this young lady back from the slave market, you told her this; that you will make this young lady's name remain in history.”

I had certainly spoken those words.

I had put out a hand of temptation towards Farnese who was

trapped within an iron cell and depending on the moonlight to read her history book.

— You'll shine brighter when holding the baton in a battlefield than you would reading books. I'll make it so that history will remember your name.....

At the time, Farnese had looked up at me with a doubtful gaze. She was a child who did not know how to smile. Now, after half a year, that girl had become a conqueror.

“Indeed, your lordship was correct. On this day, we have captured the Black Fortress, which had once withstood the revolting army for half a month, within merely half a day.”

Farnese grinned eerily.

“It seems this young lady has already left her name in history.”

Her smile was colder than the winter.

“.....”

“Ack, Ahah—!?”

I violently rubbed the crown of Farnese's head. Although Farnese was a girl who put her emotions at the very bottom of her unconsciousness, only her crown was squishy. Farnese squirmed while waving her arms due to my touching divine help.

“Trying to brag after having captured merely a single wall.”

“L-Looord. I told you I hate it there.....Hoah.....”

“There is a ranking even among the great individuals who leave their names in history. Since you were born as a heroine, you should

be aiming for the position as the 2nd greatest personage in history, so why are you pettily being satisfied by a single rampart? For starters, properly learn how to give an oration from Lapis, and then I will provide you an appropriate position.”

“Ah, understood. I understand, lord.....”

Farnese dwindled down.

Traditionally, people must learn to be modest.



Before we advanced to the White Fortress, I took a look around our military with Lapis.

Peddlers and panders had spread out a market area below the rampart. In order to avoid even the slightest bit of the winter wind, people stuck as close to the wall as possible. They appeared like the clams which attached themselves to the boulders in the ocean depths, and it felt like the fishy smell from the sea was emanating from there as well. I uttered.

“Let us go. I wish to see how the people live their lives.”

“Why would your highness go to the corner where the lowly people dwell.....?”

Lapis bowed her head.

“I want to see it, that is why.”

“This one is afraid your highness’ grace will be sullied.”

“Stop your nagging and guide me.”

I patrolled the simple marketplace. The demons watched me from afar. When I looked at them, each and every one of them was in rags and had mud smeared on their faces.

Below the wall, goblin children were throwing stones at the human corpses. It seems they were imitating the game which the witches were playing earlier. When I drew near, their parents appeared out of nowhere and hastily carried their children away. Their own world was already established there.

“It seems they had set up a world of their own in a corner away from home within a single day. Those people.....”

“Should we track down the ones who have run away and interrogate them?”

“It’s fine. Would they not run more if you interrogate them? If they run, would you not be unable to see the end? Leave them as they are.”

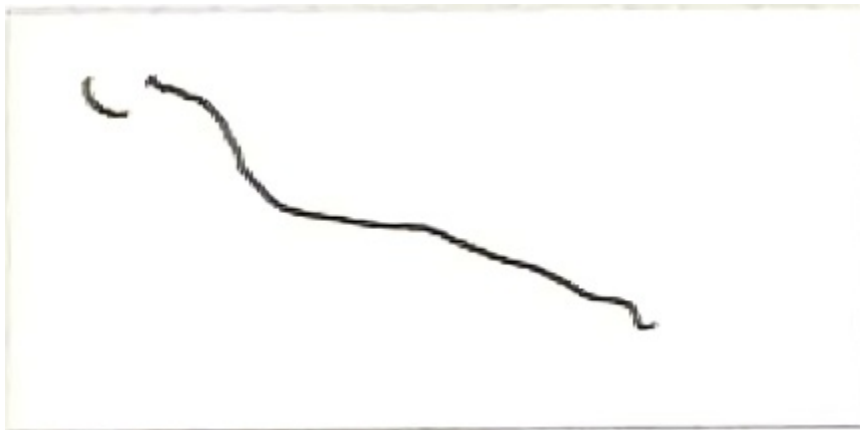
Their vitality to establish a world of their own was simply unpleasant to me.

Burnt human corpses were dangling from ropes on the wall. Below the rampart, the demons were rubbing their scrawny bodies against each other. The blackened flesh burnt by flames and the thin dried skin from the people should at least be narrowly divided by what was dead and alive, and yet, it felt like life and death were not separated in that world of theirs. But by all means, I was not vastly unknowledgeable in the fact that that indistinguishability was what life and death were.

My father died in prison. It was a heart attack.

He had tried to write a couple of lines for his will, but he had fallen

before being able to write a single line.



That was my father's will.

I had crumpled the note and stuffed it into my pocket.

My mothers and siblings rushed to me and asked if my father had left a will. I flatly told them, 'There was no will.' Instead, he left an inheritance. The dozens of trillions of won was in their possession. Before the deathmatch that was going to be carried out during the funeral, they were jumping for joy.

.....Oh, young master. Thank you very much, young master, my mothers would say and lowered their heads. My siblings called me 'elder brother' and bowed deeply. The people who had arranged my kidnapping were among them as well. Since it was family that had tried to kill their 'Young Master' and 'Elder Brother', there was nothing wrong if I were to brush away that family. I chuckled. Try to live as pleasantly as you can. I'll watch to see how well you all do.....

Like so, I had tried to hide from the world, and yet, another world ended up appearing on its own. Now I was unable to tell if the world was insane, I was insane, or the both of us were insane. Furthermore, it was a world that was going to be destroyed if left alone, and it was a world where everything, including the demons latching onto to the wall like clams, Lapis, and Farnese, was all going to disappear. A

certain malicious intent hovered over the fact that a world that was going to die was given to myself who had thrown away the world.

Was this God's intention? I asked. Was this the goal of the Heavens.....? The most believable hypothesis was that everything was a part of my father's ill-tempered joke in order to ruin my life once more. Since there was no God, Heaven's Will, or even my father in this world, this all depended on how I looked at it.

Very well then. I will wreak havoc. I shall save the world of these people, and after I have salvaged this world, that is when I will contemplate on whether I will decide to take care of the people, rule over the people, or become a gentle lord. For now, does salvaging not have the most urgent priority? Even if hundreds of thousands of people were to die by war, was that not better than the entire world being annihilated?

"Your highness. The weather is frigid. Please go inside and get some rest."

I turned my head. There, next to me, was the girl who had become one of the reasons why I had to save this world.

"Are you cold?"

"This one is alright. This one had slept in the open during colder days before."

"I am also fine. Would we not be separated once we go to war tomorrow? I wish to be with you a bit longer."

"When your highness says those kinds of words, does your highness' tongue not go frantic because of how disgusting it feels?"

Lapis looked at me as if she was looking at a bug.

"This one is sometimes startled by your highness' behavior. Please

be discerning.”

“And how would I live without you?”

“For someone who has been living fine without this one, your highness sure worries.....”

“Are you not afraid of the fact that I will be able to continue living on even if you were completely gone?”

“.....”

“If possible, do not die. Be careful and be careful again. Cherish your own life over mine. You are the last remaining piece of mind left in me.”

Lapis let out a sigh.

“This one has always been a part of the group of individuals who only care for themselves. Put away your concern, your highness. It is hard to handle and it is disconcerting to hear. Please keep in mind the wisdom of bringing our bodies close while keeping our minds at a fair distance.”

“Yes. That’s right, isn’t it?”

Lapis and I followed along the rampart and walked forward.

Now that I thought about it, we have never had the separate opportunity to enjoy a date.

If that was the case, then this was our first date, and yet out of all the locations in the world, our date course was a wall with a bunch of burnt corpses hanging off of it. What kind of elegant date was this? Be it romance or something else, there was nothing here at all.

The vastly stretched mountain range—a rampart connected by segments—the ropes hanging the corpses—and even the will that my father was unable to complete, like a road that was erased midway

through, it felt as if it was rattling on gloomily saying that everyone will end up like this as well. Since this felt like a date course that rather befitted the two us, I chuckled to myself. Lapis gave me a weird look.

In the path that we had gone past, the young goblins gathered once more. I could hear the sound of stones hitting the wall.

After listening carefully, their total score was 3.

□ The Northern Guardian, Margrave of Rosenberg, Georg von Rosenberg
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 2, Day 25
The Black Mountains, White Fortress

I went up to the upper story of the fortress gate and looked down onto the field.

The enemy forces were setting up camp in a location far away from our fortress gate. A black flag was waving in the mountain pass. Demon Lord Dantalian was using a black flag to represent his own troops since he did not have his own emblem. The Demon Lord of the black flag had arrived at the Black Mountains and captured the Black Fortress..... For a coincidence, it was a rather humorous one.

The captains measured the enemy army with their eyes,

“It appears like they have a bit under 3,000.”

“It doesn’t seem like there is a huge difference in numbers compared to our troops. We shall protect this spot with ease.”

“Mm.”

I nodded my head. The problem was the number of mages. Last autumn, Dantalian had led over 11 witches. He most likely brought a considerable number of witches this time as well. There was a need to oppose that.

I had spent the money, which could have been used to buy infantries, to hire more mages. Our forces had 25 mages. It was an impressive number. This was more than enough to defend against Dantalian.

“General, look over there.”

In the location where the captain was pointing, the enemy dwarves were building something. It was a self-assembled catapult. Assuming that they were trying to siege us with that garbage, the captains laughed in ridicule.

“Hah. Would they even be able to toss a rock this far?”

“They used their heads a little, though. Dragging a large catapult into this path would be impractical, so an easy to assemble one is..... Well, it’s still useless even if they do that, but their efforts are praiseworthy.”

Moments later, they had begun to launch something with the catapults. Something that appeared to be lighter than stone, either collided against the rampart or landed on top of the wall. A captain went to pick one of the objects up and brought it back. The captain hesitantly presented it to me.

“General, this is.....”

A head.

The half burnt head of a corpse.

“.....”

The corpse’s face was twisted fiendishly.

It was the face of a person who had suffered until the moment of their demise.

The enemy had burned the prisoners alive.

My hands trembled when I thought about the penitence that the prisoners must have experienced.

“Those, shameless devils.....”

I knew.

I was already aware that Dantalian was this kind of person.

But there was no need to go out of his way to burn them. He could have beheaded the prisoners cleanly, ensuring that they would suffer the least amount before they died. Despite that, he had purposely utilized the most painful execution method. Just to insult me.

After catapulting over 30 heads, the enemy catapults stopped. Then, six cavalries approached from the enemy camp and stopped at the fortress gate. They were holding a white flag which represented ‘negotiation’.

“.....Open the gate. I will go out personally.”

“Would it not be dangerous, general?”

“If something happens to me, then immediately fire the arrows and kill them. Order the crossbowmen to be ready to fire.”

The chief gatekeeper opened the gate.

Once I passed the iron gate, the enemy cavalry was standing right in front of me. Among them, a man wearing a black mantle bobbed his head at me.

“It has been a long time, Margrave. No, should I call this our first encounter? I am Demon Lord Dantalian. I am honored that you did not disregard the negotiation and came out to meet with us in person.”

“A man who does not know his manners.....”

So this man was Dantalian. I could not see this fragile looking spineless fellow as a monarch. If I were to wield my blade and charge at him, then killing him immediately should be possible. After readying myself to pull out my sword at a moment’s notice, I spoke.

“Oh, Demon Lord. You must have sincerely come here prepared to die. What is your ulterior motive to have requested a negotiation right

after having flung the corpses of the prisoners at us? Tell me the reason why I should not cut your throat right this instant.”

“You are being rather aggressive. That was merely a small gift since we are not individuals who keep a distance between one another, after all.....”

Dantalian laughed.

“You have destroyed my Demon Lord Castle, and I have now arrived at your walls. I would be ashamed to come here empty handed. Did you like my present?”

“.....”

“Aha. It seems you were not that satisfied.”

Dantalian slightly glanced up at the wall. The crossbowmen were aiming their weapons at Dantalian there. If I ordered them to, then they will immediately fire their bolts and penetrate Dantalian’s throat. He should not be unaware of this fact, and yet, Dantalian was still smiling.

“That is fine. I had prepared more gifts just in case you were to make a fuss. Look.”

Dantalian turned his body and gestured towards his camp. In that location, dwarves were hammering wooden pillars.

Soon after, over a hundred columns were erected. My eyes went wide the moment I saw what was tied to those wooden pillars. A prisoner was bound to each column. The dwarves approached the pillars with a torch in hand. It appeared as if they were planning to immediately set the humans on fire. The prisoners wailed.

— Save us! General.....

— Please don't throw us away.....

My hands trembled. Was that the deed of a man? Did the demons not refer to themselves as demonkind and boast as being humane? Despite that, are you telling me that they can commit that sort of deed without any hesitation?

“You bastard.....”

“Please order your crossbowmen to lower their weapons. I am a petty man with a lot of cowardice. Whenever someone threatens me, my body aches and my flesh trembles, making it difficult to breathe.”

“Is that so? Bask in your last breath in this life as much as you can. After I have slit your gullet, you will long for that breath once you are in Hell.”

“Ooh. Terrifying. How very terrifying. By the looks of it, it seems the margrave has a natural talent in threatening others.”

Dantalian raised his right hand.

“—Unfortunately, that is a talent that I have never obtained.”

At that moment, one of the pillars was set on fire. The column must have already been smeared in oil as the flames had begun to rise instantly. While looking down at the fire that appeared like the maw of a beast approaching them, the prisoner screamed.

— Aaack! Aack, Aaaaaaaah.....

At once, the flame swallowed the human body. The prisoner struggled desperately as they burned. Save me, please save me, once these cries ceased, only smoke rose up from that spot. Towards myself

who was unable to open his mouth, Dantalian spoke.

“Margrave, let us be honest.”

“.....”

“As you have witnessed, I am a piece of scum. Garbage, if you insist. It is in my nature to treat the lives of humans lower than that of a fly. But what about you, Margrave? Are you not a governor who follows justice? Do you not cherish the lives of your subordinates as if they were your own children? I am this kind of person and the margrave is that kind of person. It is quite unfavorable for you to face scum such as myself.”

I touched the hilt of my sword with the edge of my fingers.

“.....What do you want to say?”

“Let us call a ceasefire.”

A ceasefire? How could he ask for a ceasefire? Unsure of what the other party’s true intentions were, I glared sharply at Dantalian. Dantalian spoke while digging his ear.

“Due to your splendid hospitality, I was able to acquire a bloodless victory. However, passing over the Black Fortress, I do not have the confidence in capturing the White Fortress as well. It is not as if I have a considerable amount of military strength..... Even if I were to overdo myself and attempt a siege, it is obvious that only my forces will suffer.”

“You know your place well, rookie.”

“

You should also understand your place as an elderly man

, Margrave. Does the back of your neck on your old bones not feel cold? You are in a situation where a young miss is pointing her sword at you, after all.”

“.....What?”

“Do you not fear the Imperial Princess, Margrave?”

My mind went blank for an instant.

What was he talking about? What did I hear just now? What exactly did this man before me grasp in order to throw that sort of question? Dantalian snickered.

“The Emperor of the Habsburg Empire has already lost his authority. The Crown Prince is nothing more than dead wood, as well. As you are the last remaining loyalist, she is an individual that only the margrave, such as yourself, would fear. Would the Imperial Princess not desire to purge you when the opportunity presents itself?”

“.....”

“I am unable to capture your rampart. Be that as it may, Margrave, it would be foolish for you to leave your stronghold and attack me since that would mean you would be performing a pitched battle while leaving aside your safe walls. In conclusion, both you and I can do absolutely nothing and simply stand here face to face. This is quite the fateful relationship we have. Our destiny.”

Dantalian’s voice felt like it was being whispered directly into my ear, and pulled me in. I now understood what it meant to be lured in by someone’s voice.

“By seizing the Black Fortress, I have piled up enough contributions to not be ashamed in the eyes of the other Demon Lords. You as well were able to prevent the White Fortress from being taken away, so that is the same as being able to save face. Since one hand washes over the other, a good thing is a good thing, so this is more than sufficient for you and me to become close friends.”

“.....”

“Margrave. I am a very liberal person.”

Dantalian smiled smoothly.

That smoothness made my blood freeze. The very fact that a wicked man was capable of smiling like that felt like an insult to the Gods and the disgrace of the world. That man was bragging as if he had already stolen something which must never be stolen. What is that? What are you telling me that is?

“If you agree to the ceasefire with us, then I will more than gladly let the prisoners go. A single person each day. Respectfully. Not the burnt heads of corpses, but humans who are in perfect conditions from their head to toe, I shall send them as so.”

I clenched my teeth.

I understood. This man before me was the Devil.

On that day, the day my subordinates were slaughtered on a hill, the apparition I had seen was not a simple illusion. The form of the Devil that appeared on the hill represented Dantalian. I muttered.

“.....By some chance, rookie.”

“Mm?”

“By some chance, if I were to behead you right here.”

I gripped the hilt of my sword.

Dantalian gazed at me.

“At that time, what sort of expression will you have on your face?”

“.....”

As if surprised by my words, Dantalian opened his eyes wide. He then raised his head up and burst into laughter. The sound of the Demon Lord's laughter stretched throughout the dry winter sky.

“That's right, isn't it? Aah. Of course, I am not omniscient and

omnipotent. There is a chance that I could have judged a person wrong. There is a chance that you, the margrave, are capable of disregarding the sight of your subordinates being burned to death and take my neck. Yes, that is more than possible.....”

Dantalian stuck out his head. Since his neck was long like a snake, he pushed his head right in front of my face.

“Then go ahead and kill me.”

“.....”

“Let us fall to Hell together, Margrave.”

He was serious.

This man, was saying that sincerely.

“People often say that Hell is a place that is forever burning in flames. However, that is incorrect. If Hell does indeed exist, then it is a winter landscape where everything is frozen. I have no doubts about it. A plain where the winter continues on and on until you forget that it is winter, forget that you are frozen, and finally, you forget yourself entirely. Absolute nothingness will engulf us. Would it not be lonely to fall into such a place by oneself? Let us go together, Margrave. Let us disappear eternally.....”

I was barely able to prevent myself from taking a step back.

This person’s eyes were not normal. I thought that it was simply black, but inside those black eyes, a blood crimson color was flowing. The smell of blood emanated from his gaze.

Demon Lord.

Was this what a Demon Lord was?

Somewhere, in some other place, I had seen eyes similar to these, but it did not cross my mind easily. I could not grasp where I had

previously witnessed these eyes.

“Hm.....”

Dantalian narrowed his eyes. In an instant, the sanguinary in his gaze had vanished. The only thing that remained on his face, where lunacy had dissipated from, was a pleasant smile.

“That was just a joke. Do laugh, Margrave.”

“.....”

“In order to respect your personality, I shall release 2 prisoners each day. Since I am in the possession of 98 captives, then I guess that means the ceasefire shall continue for 46 days. They say that people become tied together by merely brushing the other’s sleeve, but the tie connecting you and myself is remarkable.”

After uttering ‘Hiyah’, Dantalian turned the head of his horse. Before departing, Dantalian turned to look at me and spoke.

“Oh right. Since 1 has already died, it’s not 98 captives but 97 now. I apologize. I have always been weak with arithmetic. It is my weakness. In truth, it is my only weakness.”

While laughing, Dantalian gathered his group and left. The centaur cavalry followed behind the Demon Lord. Among the cavalry, there was a demon with flowing pink hair squeezed in among them. That woman was most likely the half-breed succubus referred to as the ‘King’s Concubine’.

.....Shoot them. Shoot them with reckless abandon.

I was unable to give this order to the crossbowmen. Even though my mouth was open, words did not come out. My subordinates, who were tied to the wooden pillars, were stuck in my eyes. I could not dare give the order because their wailing rang loudly in my ears.

And then I realized.

Which individual had the same eyes as that Demon Lord.

— You cannot buy my respect with fidelity. If you wish for me to respect you, then over all else, you must obtain victory.

— If by some small chance, you were to commit a mistake..... Well, I'll most likely be very disappointed.

Aah.

The Imperial Princess. It was the Imperial Princess Elizabeth.

A person with the same eyes as her was within the Demon Lord army.

For what reason were people with the soul of the Devil surrounding me on both sides? Were the Gods trying to test me? A Demon Lord was closing in on me from the front as a single segment, and the Imperial Princess was pushing me from behind as another segment. In the center of that, I was unable to choose life or loyalty.

If I were to raise my troops to tear down the Demon Lord forces and cross over the Black Mountains in order to invade the demon territory, then that would be the path of loyalty that displays the dignity of Her Majesty the Imperial Princess. But I was uncertain about whether that would be possible.

This was difficult. As it was easy to throw away one's life for fidelity, it was boundlessly easier to discard fidelity for one's life, and yet, why was it so difficult to go down a path while holding onto both one's own life and fidelity.....

▯ **The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian**
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 2, Day 25
The Black Mountains, White Fortress vicinity

“Your highness, do you truly plan to enter into a ceasefire?”

With our horses’ heads aligned next to one another, Lapis and I moved forward. Seeing our return, the soldiers in our camp started to lower the prisoners. I responded.

“Of course not. Even the margrave will be unable to hold out for more than a couple of days and will soon leap out. Since that man’s sense of justice is strong, he will most likely be unable to withstand a hoodlum such as myself.”

“But then why.....”

“I can assure you that the margrave will raid us within 10 days. Is Farnese not already waiting in ambush within the pine forest? All we have to do is pretend to retreat and then proceed to completely envelop the margrave.”

“This one understands your highness’ plan.”

We picked up the speed on our horses. Dust of snow arose from the horses’ hooves. The frigid winter wind swallowed me whole. I enjoyed the sensation that felt as if my body was becoming partially frozen. The winter wind informed me that my body was still alive. I burst out into loud laughter.

“Lapis. The margrave is a righteous individual. That sense of justice turns him into a profound character. However, that profoundness of his is thus his limitation. On the other hand, an unethical person is shallow to no end, and due to that boundless hollowness, they have no limitations. It is quite joyous that I am shallow! Can the margrave

manage my happiness? Can any of the righteous fellows in the world handle me? It must be unfortunate for the people who are unable to cope with my joy.”

“It must be nice to be cheerful, your highness.”

Lapis kept our horses close. She then spoke.

“Is your highness certain that the margrave will come out within 10 days?”

“Of course. I believe in that righteousness of his.”

“If that is so, then 20 prisoners will be sufficient.”

“.....”

“We do not have a reason to go out of our way to increase the number of prisoners and waste provisions.”

With the reins in my hand, I stared straight at Lapis. Lapis did not blink her eyes even with the winter wind pushing against her.

“Lapis.”

“Yes, your highness?”

“If you die, then you will certainly go to Hell.”

“I see. That is why this one will not die.”

Lapis met my gaze.

“According to a certain someone, they claimed that this one’s life is more precious than your highness’. Since it is such a valuable life, this one must take good care of it.”

I couldn’t believe it.

I asked.

“Do you not feel pity for the lowly prisoners?”

“This one will not commit the mistake of taking the prisoners lightly by pitying them. They are a group that can, at any time, attack this one or your highness. Since this one understands and acknowledges their strength, this one shall kill them.”

Lapis spoke flatly.

“In truth, is it not this one that is sincerely respecting the prisoners?”

Was there a way for me to not laugh in this situation?

While raising a blizzard behind us, we returned to our camp.

As soon as we returned to the unit, we beheaded 77 prisoners.

□ Blood Relative Killer, Imperial Princess of the Empire, Elizabeth von Habsburg

Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 2, Day 29

Northern Region of the Habsburg Empire

— 2nd month, 25th day. Enemy forces have captured the Black Fortress. Military strength approximately 3,000. The commander is Demon Lord Dantalian. Our forces are stationed in the White Fortress and are perfectly secured. We are abundant in provisions and have a sufficient number of arms. The fog is severe. The mountains are safe.

For a long period of time, I gazed at the report that the margrave had sent. Since I had examined it for a long time, I understood its inner contents.

.....So the margrave is afraid of me. Because he fears me, he is trying to not reveal anything, and since he is trying to not reveal anything, he had written information that is of no importance. Does the margrave not know that by trying to not disclose anything, he is actually revealing everything in detail? Is he trying to evade the immediate threat by feigning ignorance? What was his true intention behind leaving the report to a courier and not a mage, and having the message arrive today when it was originally sent on the 25th.....?

I tore the report apart.

These were not words. These were the grumbles of an old man. Words should have been written on this paper, but since there were no words and only repetition, the piece of parchment became junk. It has been my long time habit to turn junk into trash.

A cold sweat ran down the nobles' necks as they watched me shred the margrave's report. I spoke.

“Listen to this. The margrave claims that the mountains are safe. I have given my faith to the margrave. What do you all think about this matter?”

The nobles spoke together.

— Do as your highness desires.

They were words that held as much meaning as having said nothing at all.

A chuckle flowed from my lips. The nobles flinched the moment I laughed. I was unsure of the reason, but the people around me would always be terrified whenever I laughed. It was a bizarre occurrence.

“I see that you all are unbecoming. Each and every one of you has a head and mouth, and yet, how are your words one? Would it be appropriate to call it the great joy of the Empire since the nobles harmonize together as one? Would it be appropriate to spare a single person, while taking the lives of the rest, since you all repeat the same words anyway? It is a rather good idea since we will be able to save on provisions as well.”

The nobles prostrated on the floor.

— Please be discerning!

These fellows lacked even a grain of sense.

The three phrases that I despised the most in the world were ‘Your words are immeasurable’, ‘I am much obliged’, and ‘Please be discerning’. These were not words but hallucinations. No matter what

I said, they were immeasurable, obliging, and discerning, making it almost difficult to tell what was which now. Therefore, whenever I heard those three phrases, I interpreted it as a single line.

‘Please be quiet.’

If they are telling me to shut up then I shall do so. What else can I do?

I closed my mouth and walked out of the tent. The nobles quickly stood up and chased after me. Since the nobles followed after me, their attendants, knights, and knight subordinates all hastily accompanied us as well, until finally, 200 people were following a single person. Even though I did not utter a single word.

It was a comedic scene. Despite it being a humorous sight, no one was laughing. Since everyone would be afraid if I were to laugh, I refrained from doing so. I wanted to turn around and shout at the 200 people behind me.Laugh a little in your life. Laugh. Laugh I tell you.

There was a time in the past where I had actually spoken these words.

In that moment, hundreds of low government officials forcefully moved the muscles on their faces and started to laugh. **Ha, haha, ha, hahaha, ha, haha, ha, ha**, all at once they uttered.

It was horrible.

Occasionally, that would appear in my nightmares.

After that day, I never gave the order to laugh ever again. It was regretful. How could I have possibly hoped that people who could not speak properly could laugh decently?

They were not humans but ghosts. They were individuals that lived as phantoms and were going to meet their ends as phantoms. It was the way of the world for them to live their lives as ghosts. Because I

believed it as so, I had no other choice but to leave them to their own devices. To humans, words should exist as a method to release their inner minds, and yet, humans used them to cover their minds and contort it, causing their words to not retain a single portion of their true meaning or contain the smallest amount of their emotions.

A plain was stretched out in front of the group of 200 people. There were wooden columns planted into the earth here and there. Orcs, goblins, minotaurs, and other similar demons were bound to the pillars, one demon per column. They were the prisoners that our forces had captured.

There was even a Demon Lord among them.

Rank 68th, Demon Lord Belial.

A detached unit, while doing reconnaissance, had encountered the Demon Lord by chance and captured him alive. Bound to the wooden pillar, Belial glared at me. I did not use ropes to tie the Demon Lord to the column, instead, I had nailed him to it. I had politely pinned his palms, wrists, and ankles to the wood. Belial groaned in the demon language while bleeding.

“.....Curse you. Curse you all. You plague of the continent, the Goddesses will never forgive all of you. Judgment shall fall on your race which has trampled and burned our homes.....”

The nobles muttered among one another behind me. They could not understand the demon language. Well, they also did not know the Imperial language properly, so there was no chance that they would know another race's language.

I took out a knife. It was a type of blade that was used when butchering animals. After seeing the blade, Belial opened his eyes wide. The Demon Lord muttered more desperately.

“Oh Gods, oh Goddesses, please, I beg of you to punish the ones before me. Punish injustice with righteousness and return blood with blood. As your weak servant, I humbly pray. Oh Goddesses,

please.....”

“That is useless.”

The Demon Lord turned to look at me.

“What?”

“I said that is all pointless, oh weak Demon Lord.”

“You, what are you..... no. How do you know our language.....?”

“There is no yours or mine in speech. As a flower is still a flower if it were to bloom in my garden, then even if a flower were to blossom in yours, it is still a simple flower. I normally take joy in viewing the flowers within my possession, so I do not dislike learning new languages.”

Belial glared at me.

“What do you plan to do with me, human?”

“I will take your life.”

I took out a whetstone and sharpened the knife. The vibrations that came off the iron, while being sharpened by the stone, were transferred to my palm. Belial watched the sight of me grinding my blade in mute bewilderment.

“Do you see the banners that are waving on the other side of the plains? That is the army led by Demon Lord Marbas. Trenches are dug deeply in their front lines and wooden fences are set up, so their defenses are not ordinary. Rushing in there and crushing them would not be the most profitable tactic for us. That is why I plan to lure the enemy here.”

“Hah. Sir Marbas leads the greatest cavalry corps in the demon world. He is not someone who would lose to the likes of you.”

“Pardon me, Demon Lord. Do you know who I am?”

“What?”

“It seems you do not. I assumed that you did since you had said ‘the likes of you’.”

“.....And who exactly are you to be saying that?”

Good.

The blade was sharpened well.

I momentarily put the iron of the blade in a fire and heated it.

“My name is Elizabeth von Habsburg. There are a couple more names in between, but I will omit those. Demon Lord Belial, albeit a short time, I will be in your care. Over all else, I will be the last person you will see in the final moments of your life, after all.”

“.....!”

Marbas will most certainly be unable to hold still if his military personnel were to witness a Demon Lord being skinned alive before their very eyes. The demons will rage, and unable to restrain that wrath, they will charge. They will kick aside their sturdy walls and safe trenches to assault us.

It seems Belial understood what my intentions were as he had started to struggle desperately. Of course, Belial, whose body was nailed down, could not escape.

“No! Sir Marbas, do not come! Please leave me to my demise!”

“Give up. No matter how much you cry out, they are unable to hear you.”

“No! Aaack! You mustn’t, you bastard! You must not!”

“How troublesome.”

A type of person who did not know when things were futile.

I pressed my knife against the other party's skin. The blade sliced into the Demon Lord's flesh smoothly as if it was butter. A cry erupted. Aiming for the moment his tongue stuck out of his mouth, I severed the end of his tongue. Another scream burst out. Belial's cries had now lost its form and had become merely wailings of pain.

I glanced at a mage. The mage nodded his head and furtively activated a sound enhancement spell. From that moment on, Belial's screams were enhanced and thus resonated loudly throughout the entire plains. Every time Belial's finger or toe was cut off, our soldiers cheered.

It was around the time I had started to peel Belial's cheek, the nobles shouted.

- Your Highness, the enemy forces are moving. It's Marbas' flag!
- The enemy troops are carrying out a full charge!

The nobles blatantly pointed towards the front.

They were indeed right. The demon flags were fluttering violently. The sound of horns completely filled that side of the plains. They were preparing to charge soon. I cleaned the knife with a washcloth.

“Listen carefully. The enemy forces will be agitated so they will assault us with reckless abandon. Do not pit yourselves against them there. Drag them deep into our territory and envelop them. Constantly beat the drums and blow the horns powerfully. Move quiescently while making the enemy troops unable to regain their composure by causing a commotion with the noise. Do you understand?”

The nobles pounded their chest with their right arm.

— Yes, your highness!

The battle continued till the evening.

The enemy forces clashed against our defense line with their bare bodies. The cavalry corps led by Marbas was powerful. However, their cavalries were exhausted from having ascended the hill, had their pace decreased by getting stuck on the wooden fences, were obstructed by the spearmen, and were shot to death by the crossbowmen. The demons attempted to charge 4, 5, and 6 times and fell to their deaths repeatedly.

Finally, the enemy troops retreated. It was after they had failed to break through our defenses for the 7th time. They were not as fast as they were when they had first charged at us. I did not miss that opportunity.

“Pursue them and tear them to pieces.”

Our knight corps rushed forward. Since they had sufficient rest, the knights were full of vigor. The backs of the enemy were cut by the blades swung by our knights. The enemy soldiers fell on their faces at the descending portion of the hill. Half-corpses fell and tumbled down the hill, and by the time they had reached the base of the hill, they were already complete corpses. One after the other, half-dead bodies rolled down the hill. The enemy's retreat had changed into defeat. Belial, who was hanging from the wooden pillar, had not died yet. He was watching the battle that had turned into a slaughter with wakeful eyes. With blood clogged in his throat, he wailed.

— Aack. Uuuuaaaa.....uuaaaah! Uuuuaaaack!

Later into the evening, sleet started to fall from the sky. There were many enemy soldiers who had died on the hill while staring up at the sky. They had died with their eyes and mouths wide open. Snow and wind entered those opened gaps. Since the corpses had turned cold, the snow did not melt and firmly rested on top of their bodies. Snow piled up in the mouths of the corpses.

I slashed Belial's neck and tossed his head into the snow. There were so many heads buried in the snow that it was difficult to differentiate the other heads from Belial's. Although goblins, centaurs, and humans all had different appearances, the form they all had after death were nearly the same. So that was life. Lives were not the same because they all lived, they were a single life because they all died the same..... Although lives were supposed to be able to understand each other due to their fear and sympathy for death, since they were unable to experience death in their lifetime, the demons and humans were, in truth, separated and will most likely fight for eternity..... After gazing at the decapitated heads buried in the snow for a period of time, I turned away.

On my way back to my tent, nobles and soldiers were lined up on both sides. They were all covered in blood. While I walked down the path, they knelt down one at a time.

— Your Highness.

— You are the victor.

At the end of the pathway, my brother was standing at the entrance to my tent. There was no blood on his armor.

Once I approached, my brother's knights took a step back. I dusted the shoulder of my brother.

“It is a relief that you are unscathed, Your Highness the Crown

Prince.”

My brother trembled.

“You..... you, are the Devil.”

“I know. Is there a problem with that?”

“.....”

“I asked if there is a problem.”

My brother lowered his head. He had muttered something in a low voice, but I could not hear him.

How pathetic.

Feeling pity for that petty pride and rebellious spirit, I disregarded my brother and entered my tent. He was a man who could not properly gaze at a person unless he had bedded them, anyway.

The maids approached to unclothe and clean my body.

While wiping my lower abdomen, the chief maid whispered.

“Your highness, a message has arrived from Demon Lord Paimon.”

“Put it away. I will listen to it later.”

The chief maid bowed her head.

With my now clean body, I sat down on a bookstand.

The winter wind seeped into my now cooled body. Since the tent was unable to block the wind, winter was able to come inside in its entirety. My head was clear. I thought about the report that the margrave had sent and arrived at dawn.

..... The margrave was afraid of me. It would only be appropriate to respect that fear. It was obvious for the weak to be terrified of those

they recognized as stronger than themselves. But for what reason did he fear me, and yet, choose to not obey my command? Was it pride? What meaning could come from an unhealthy pride? I could not understand. Was it stupidity? Did I have to berate the stupidity of an old man? I was not sure. Was it my own arrogance for having considered the other party as a senile old man on my own volition? That was most likely it.....

I picked up a quill and started to write. It was a single word.

— Victory(勝).

□ The Northern Guardian, Margrave of Rosenberg, Georg von
Rosenberg
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 3, Day 1
The Black Mountains, White Fortress

— Victory(勝).

I became dumbstruck as if I had been hit on the head.

The message of triumph that the Imperial Princess had sent had only the single word ‘victory’ written on it. Unable to figure out what the Imperial Princess was trying to say, I pondered.

.....Was she telling me that she had won, or was she telling me to win? Was she instructing me to submit since she had obtained victory? Did it mean for me to distinguish who the victor was on my own? Was the Imperial Princess the victor while I was the loser?

This single word contained all these meanings. The Imperial Princess did not boast or brag about her accomplishment. She used her victory to threaten and intimidate me. By establishing her victory as an example, she was urging me to succeed as well. If it seemed like victory was out of my reach, then she was advising me to submit to her. The pressure to win pushed my body from behind towards the front where the enemy forces resided, and the advice to submit pulled my body back towards the place where our forces were holding out. The enemy and ally were clearly different, and yet, I could not see the difference between being pushed and being pulled.

The rightful ruler of the Empire was His Majesty the Emperor and the rightful heir to the throne was the Crown Prince, and yet, the Imperial Princess stepped on the Emperor’s dignity and laughed at the Crown Prince’s authority. That precession of stepping and

laughing was exceedingly imposing.Was she telling me to join that procession? Was that what victory(勝) meant? Was an old man struggling to succeed in his late years what triumph means? Gazing up at the sky, I earnestly hoped that my aged body would at least not be sullied.

I called the captains to my room and gave them an order.

“The army led by the Imperial Princess has won a huge victory in their battle. Since the news of victory has arrived for us, the enemy residing in the Black Fortress should soon receive a report of defeat. Organize the troops in case the enemy attempts to withdraw.”

The captains lowered their heads.

“Do you plan to pursue the enemy now, general?”

“No. It is still deep in the night. Consider the possibility of being ambushed if we were to chase after them in a hurry. Once dawn arrives and the first rooster cries, spread out the scouts and then advance.”

“As you command.”

After sending the captains out, I got changed. A young lad assisted me in putting my armor on. This lad's father had always helped me put on my clothes throughout his entire life, but last autumn, he had died during the battle against Dantalian. The son inherited his father's job as if it was natural.

Different from his father, the son's fingers were clumsy and awkward while

assisting me in putting on my gear. I could not blame him for that. Although this lad considered it embarrassing to not be blamed, I considered him being embarrassed to be boundlessly more humiliating.

“This is fine. I shall do the rest myself.”

“I apologize, your honor.”

“What is there to apologize for.....? You can leave now.”

“Understood.”

I firmly equipped the rest of my equipment and sat at the desk.

Since the Imperial Princess had generously written and sent the news of victory, as a vassal of the Imperial family, I had to send a letter of congratulations. Previously, I was barely able to write a couple of lines, but this time, absolutely nothing came to mind.

.....Your Highness the Imperial Princess, please do not kill your father and brother, and do not insult them either. I request of you to not throw away your filial piety.

When I was about to write down those lines, I clenched my fist strongly. As soon as I thought about the Imperial Princess' face, Demon Lord Dantalian's grin was situated there as well. My chest pounded. The febleness of my words smoldered into my bones.

How difficult this was.

Because of my old age, it seems I did not have the margin of power left in me to handle a single sentence.

I closed my eyes. With my eyes closed, I thought about the form of myself giving a great appeal to the people of the northern region.

I attempted to picture myself approaching His Majesty the Emperor after having repulsed the Demon Lord's army and the Imperial Princess' cabal, however, the only image that came to mind was solely that of the Imperial Princess' hands skinning the leather of the alligator. Just the fingers covered in blood. At the edge of her hands, the leather was skinned as if it was fated to be separated from the body since the beginning of time. My body trembled because of that fluid hand movement.....

Where was that alligator captured from?

□ The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 3, Day 1
The Black Mountains, White Fortress vicinity

An urgent message had arrived last night.

There was a code on the message that was difficult to decipher. Looking into their crystal balls, the witches took out strokes from the words.

I watched as the witches deciphered the report. As the strokes gathered together and started to form coherent words, the witches' gazes shook. Humbaba read the lines out loud.

".....2nd month, 29th day. Complete defeat. Marbas' 2nd army has been crushed."

The complexion on Humbaba's face as she turned to look at me was pale. I nodded.

"Do not stop. Continue reading."

".....From the 15,000 chosen elite troops, around 9,000 remain. The opposition is the alliance between the Habsburg Empire and Polish-Lithuanian Kingdom. Approximate enemy military strength is 40,000. This is the Neris Plains. The enemy is infiltrating further in. Ah! Marbas is a horse-headed bastard. I'll get to the point. I will hold out for 13 days. Dantalian, you pierce through....."

Humbaba gulped.

"That is all, master."

I brushed my chin.

Complete defeat and crushed. These were heavy terms. Although

Barbatos was a girl who disorderly copulated with me and laughed vulgarly, when the issue at hand was related to war, she became a completely different person. Barbatos would never exaggerate words when it involved war. Complete defeat and crushed. A bitter taste filled my mouth.

“13 days, is it? Did Barbatos say that she will hold out for 13 days?”

“Yes, master.”

I felt like I could see Barbatos' narrowed gaze from the fact that she had informed me of the exact date. If it was 13 days, then that was nearly two weeks, so it would have been fine to write two weeks.

Regardless, Barbatos stated 13 days. She had calculated the days she could endure and the days she could not, and concluded it as 13 days. However, it was no more or no less than that and was exactly 13.

True to their name, Barbatos' first army and Marbas' second army were the main attack force of the Demon Lord Allied Forces. If they were to collapse then this war would be completely over.

Barbatos instructing me to 'pierce through' meant that she was requesting for me to attack the enemy allied forces from the rear, after having penetrated through the White Fortress. We not only had to capture the White Fortress, but we had to march all the way to the rear of the enemy forces, so the 13 days deadline was barely 13 days. While estimating the chances of succeeding in my head, I asked.

“Humbaba. How many days will it take for us to go north from the mountains and reach the Neris Plains?”

“Uh, well. If we move as fast as possible, then four to five days.....? That will be a really tough march. If we advance while crushing, burning, and getting rid of the insufferable things in our path, then around 10 days?”

“Since a day has passed, then by adding a day to that 10, that will

make it 11 days. If we include the days needed to march, then we must immediately capture the White Fortress within 3, but if possible, 2 days.”

“Hii—, two days. Isn’t that really rough—.....?”

The witches muttered in despair. Originally, our forces were planning to conquer the White Fortress over the course of a week. Even a week was a short amount of time to capture that stronghold. Since it had become shorter than that, the witches were at a loss for words. Two days from now was the day after tomorrow. It was obvious that the witches would be troubled.

Despite that, I smiled.

The corners of my lips twisted on their own.

“—I see the heavens are helping us.”

“Pardon?”

“Around this time, Rosenberg should be preparing for a running fight. Since we have now received the report that the Demon Lord Allied Forces were completely defeated, then the margrave should have received it sooner. The margrave should already be awfully aggravated because of what I had done, and since this favorable situation has piled on top as well, the margrave’s bottom should itch so much that he will be unable to stay still.”

I stood from my seat. After standing up, it felt as if it wasn’t the margrave whose bottom was trembling, but myself. Well, what was so bad about that? There was no one who would blame me if my sexy derriere were to tremble a bit.

“Humbaba, go find and bring back Farnese from the pine forest. We shall have a war council immediately..... no, never mind! I will personally go to the forest. That will be faster. Will you give me a lift on your broom?”

“Yes. This one’s broom will always have a vacant spot for you, master.”

The witches flew into the night sky while giving me a lift.

It was a beautiful night with sleet fluttering around. Every time the moonlight collided against the small sheets of ice, the rays scattered. A countless number of narrowly split moonlight fell down upon the hundreds of thousands of pieces of snow. Although it was a dark night, the darkness only loomed over the ground.

The witches set me down beside the pine trees. The entire surroundings were still. Moonlight could not settle down in this pine grove. Since 4 days ago, Farnese had led the cavalry here to lie and wait in ambush.

Humbaba let out a long whistle.

— Hwiiiiiiii.

The sound was soon consumed into the blizzard and disappeared into the other side of the forest. Shortly after, while leaving a trail of snow dust, a group of centaurs quickly approached us. The centaurs were not wearing anything on top so their chests were bare. They recognized who I was and lowered their front legs to give their greeting.

“Where is the acting general?”

There was no response.

I furrowed my brows.

An unpleasant chill sank into my spine.

“My general? Where is Farnese?”



There was an icehouse at the location where the centaurs had led me.

Once I entered the igloo, I saw Farnese huddled in a corner. Even in this forest, where the winter was fierce, Farnese did not wear a fur overcoat. She only wore the military uniform made from cloth.

Whenever the soldiers saw Farnese like this, they would say that it was because her father and mother had conceived her in the snow. The soldiers believed that the cold must have seeped into the mother's womb and into the child's bones, so Farnese did not feel cold even during the winter. To the soldiers, the general was a girl born in the winter. While shutting herself in the icehouse, Farnese mumbled in a voice that could barely be heard.

“.....ry.....orry.....ry.....”

“Farnese?”

“.....”

Farnese froze.

Feeling that something was peculiar, I placed my hand on her shoulder, and at that moment, a scream burst out. Farnese clutched her head and lowered her entire body to the floor. Surprised by the sudden reaction, I took a step back.

“I’m sorry..... I’m sorry, Father..... I’m sorry.....”

I held my breath.

My head became cold.

My spine felt numb as if a current was flowing through it.

Farnese, unaware of the fact that I had arrived, continued to mutter.

“I’m sorry, Father. I won’t do it again.....I’m sorry.....”

These damned Gods.

Unable to listen any longer, I ran out of the igloo. If I were to hastily approach a person in that sort of mental condition, then that would only make the situation worse. The fact that I understood that knowledge through experience, was the only reason I had to be thankful to the Gods.

Outside the icehouse, hundreds of centaurs were lowering their front hooves. The leader of the centaurs was kneeling at the front. Pointing towards the igloo, I asked.

“Since when.”

My voice shook with rage.

“Since when has the general become like that?”

“Ever since we had set up an ambush camp in the pine forest.....”

“What is the reason?”

“T-This commander does not know that well. The general is fine during the noon, but strangely, she ends up like that during the night. It seemed as if the Miss has an unnatural fear of the pine trees so we had built that igloo. That’s why the situation had gotten a slight bit better, but.....”

“The situation got slightly better?”

I looked back and forth between the icehouse and the centaur.

“Are you telling me that the situation got better? That is better?”

“.....”

“Tell me now. Are you kneeling down in order to beg for forgiveness, or are you, by kneeling before me, requesting for me to cut your head off?”

The centaur’s shoulders trembled.

“Y-Your highness. Please at least spare this one’s life.....!”

“Why did you not tell me sooner?”

“The general entreated for us to never inform your highness, so.....”

I unsheathed the long sword from my waist and severed the centaurs’ neck. Blood spurted out from his neck. Crimson blood sprayed onto the pure white snow.

I looked around and spoke.

“I am your lord. Do not forget this.”

The centaur cavalry bowed their heads further. Leaving them aside, I entered the igloo once more. Farnese was still muttering in a voice mixed with weeping.

“Farnese.”

I approached Farnese and grabbed her head. I was barely able to establish eye contact with her.

“Farnese. It is me. Dantalian.”

“I’m sorry..... I’m sorry, I made a mistake.....”

“I am not your father. Look carefully, Farnese. Look at me. I am not your father. I will not hit you or violate you. I will not confine you within a library and give you food through a hole in the door.”

I whispered desperately.

“I will not starve you just because you were disobedient. I will not burn or tear apart the books which you cherish. Farnese, I am not your father. I am Dantalian. Dantalian.”

“.....”

“You are no longer an illegitimate child bound by your family. No one can confine you. You are here. You are my vassal. I am your lord. Behold. As long as you do not betray me first, I will never abandon you.”

The focus in Farnese’s pupils slowly returned.

“Lo.....rd.....?”

“That’s right.”

“T-The pine trees.....”

Farnese shivered.

It appeared as if she had forgotten how to shed tears, so she could only cry with her voice.

“So many cicadas were attached to the pine trees..... they kept crying..... my father to this young lady..... this young lady, repeatedly.....”

“.....”

Was that it.

The tree that Farnese had seen through the window when she was young, was the same type of pine tree as the ones here.

I stared deeply into Farnese’s eyes.

“It is not the sound of cicadas. There are no cicadas here.”

“But, they keep..... the sound of cicadas, profusely.....”

“That is not the sound of cicadas. It is the sound of snow. Farnese, you are currently confusing the sound of snow as the cries of cicadas. Due to your memories bound to the pine trees, those memories are causing this mistake.”

“No, lord..... that’s not it..... that can’t be.....”

“I will prove it to you.”

I grabbed Farnese’s wrist and dragged her. Although Farnese struggled to not leave the igloo, I forcefully pulled her out. Farnese was aware of who I was. That meant that there was not a complete problem in her cognitive function. The moment her usual awareness and her confusing memories ground against each other, that was the optimum opportunity. It was during this moment I had to use her current perception to crush her past memories.

The blizzard wailed as it blew through the pine trees. Farnese kept her head down and tried to not look anywhere. I grabbed Farnese’s chin and forced her to face her surroundings.

“Look before you. It is winter right now!”

“.....”

“There are no cicadas. Those were all hallucinations that you had created on your own. Do the sound of snow and the cries of cicadas sound the same to you? Look carefully, Farnese. Open your eyes and behold your surroundings clearly. You are 16-years-old. If you are 16, then you are already a damn adult. How long will you moan because you are bound by your mongrel-like father!?”

I met Farnese’s gaze once more. Farnese’s pupils were trembling. However, they were not the shaking of eyes that were unable to see, but the trembling of eyes that had yet to find their center.

“You are no longer the victim. You are the assailant. You are no

longer a part of the weak who are offended, but a part of the strong who offend. If someone tries to take your life, then kill them before they can get to you first. It is simple. If that someone is your father, then kill your father, and if that someone is God, then kill God as well.”

“Lord.....”

“All you have to do is take all their lives.”

“But, if your lordship throws away this young lady..... then this young lady will again.”

“Do not behave like a spoiled child.”

Farnese flinched.

“I do not have the hobby of raising a broken doll.”

“.....”

Slowly.

A little bit at a time, Farnese’s trembling settled down.

I could not tell if 30 minutes or an hour had passed. Except, thanks to the witches having cast a barrier around us, we did not freeze. Farnese opened her mouth.

“Lord..... it is cold.....”

“Have you gained your senses a bit?”

“This young lady is unsure.....”

“Is the sound of cicadas still resonating in your ears?”

“A little..... but, it is much better than earlier.”

“Consider it a fortune that I had discovered you before Lapis did. If

it were Lapis, then she would have grabbed your head and buried it in the snow.”

“Ah, aah. If it were Miss Lapis, then that is certainly possible—”

I pushed the back of Farnese’s head and instantly forced her face into the snow. Farnese did her utmost to wave her arms.

After 4, 5 seconds, I lifted Farnese’s head back up. With a ‘Puah’, Farnese let out a breath. From her eyebrows to her nose, her entire face was covered in snow. I smirked at her.

“And the thought that Lapis would question you further in a situation like this seems to come to mind. I shall ask again. Have you recovered your senses? Or do I have to shove more opium into your mouth for your head to become clear?”

“.....I see your highness’ personality is like that of a dog.”

“Oh? You have finally uttered a profanity. I give you my sincere congratulations. I was quite curious on when you would finally learn how to swear.”

Once I let go of her head, Farnese wiped her face with the edge of her clothes. She picked up the hat that had fallen on the ground and dusted it.

“.....What kind of profanities must one say in order to let out their feelings sufficiently in a situation like this? Your lordship is a man who claims to know everything, so you should know this well.”

“Of course. If you mutter the word ‘fuck’, then everything will be a bliss.”

“That’s right. This feels like fuck.”

Farnese let out a sigh.

It was finally time to get into the main topic.

“For what reason did your lordship come all the way here to find this young lady?”

“The second army led by Marbas has been completely defeated.”

“.....”

Farnese gazed towards my direction.

A cold glow had returned to her eyes.

“.....Then the margrave should be preparing for a running battle.”

“That is what I think as well. How to lure him out. In order to discuss this topic, I have come here to bullshit with you during the middle of the night.”

“Mm. The margrave is a veteran with a lot of caution. Even if we were to feign a retreat, there is no possibility that he would simply chase after us. A certain assurance, we have to plant a type of conviction which will assure him that it would be okay to pursue our forces.....”

Farnese spat on the ground. It seems she was getting rid of the snow that was shoved into her face a second ago. I explained the rest of the situation.

“Due to Marbas’ defeat, Barbatos has ended up being isolated. After capturing the White Fortress within two days, our forces must travel northwards without delay. Is this possible?”

“.....”

Farnese narrowed her eyes.

“It is not two days, lord. Tonight is the time limit.”

“Tonight?”

“Aah, there are two situations that the margrave fears the most.

The first is us hastily running away the moment we receive the urgent message and being able to escape safe and sound. The second is the margrave pursuing us while we withdraw leisurely, and meeting his defeat by being caught in an ambush. These two are the worst turnouts for the margrave. The former is allowing the enemy, that is running away right before their eyes, to escape, so it would show disloyalty, and the latter is being defeated by the enemy and falling down, so it would mean the end of life.”

“Continue.”

“The urgent message came today. It had arrived just now, lord. The margrave most likely has yet to decide on whether he fears disloyalty or death more. Once tonight passes and dawn arrives, the margrave’s judgment will slowly become more clear. This confusing night, where the margrave is still uncertain of his fears, this is the most optimum opportunity for our forces. If we were to miss our chance today, then luring out the margrave in the future will become nearly impossible.”

Farnese brushed the snow off of her and stood up.

Farnese gazed at the witches who were surrounding us in a circle. She muttered.

“Lord. Let us throw a bait.”

□ The Northern Guardian, Margrave of Rosenberg, Georg von Rosenberg
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 3, Day 1
The Black Mountains, White Fortress

Late in the night.

A captain rushed to me and reported.

“General, we are being attacked! Witches are bombarding the walls!”

An enemy attack.

Due to that one phrase, I picked up my sheath and blade and immediately headed to the top of the rampart.

“What is happening?”

The soldiers were unable to give a proper response and pointed towards the sky. As soon as I looked upwards, I saw witches soaring through the night sky. The moonlight was being covered by clouds and sleet, making it difficult to see their figures properly. Despite that, I could tell that the number of witches was around 20. The witches dropped stubby objects onto the rampart.

“This is.....”

They were heads. The same type of heads that were catapulted last time were now descending like hail by the hands of the witches. The heads of humans, that were blackened by flames, covered the rampart.

— Hii, hiiiiik!

The soldiers lowered their backs and trembled. They believed that the witches had placed a curse on the heads. Hearing the screams coming from the privates, I narrowed my eyes.

“.....”

Why?

After having pierced through the frigid winter air, why did they come here this late into the night just to drop the heads of corpses?

Although it may be a rather efficient method in lowering the morale on our side, the timing was peculiar. Of all occasions, it was during this belated night. What meaning was there to this if they were not going to initiate a siege?

While furrowing my brows, I gave an order.

“Send all the mages up.”

Our Aerial Mage Force stepped onto the rampart and flew up into the night sky.

The one thing aerial mages feared the most was fighting in the darkness of the night. However, it was fine for this occasion. The number of witches on their side was 20 and the mages on our side were nearly 30. We can overwhelm them.

A heated battle filled the sky. Witches were shot down by crossbows and screamed as they fell. The witches, who lost hold of their brooms, fell to the ground and had their heads crushed from the impact.

The sound of heads cracking echoed from below the rampart. Like pheasants would fall when killed by hunters, the witches descended one by one. Since there was no light source in the bottom where the

witches fell, it appeared as dark as a pit to Hell. Corpses could not be seen and only the sound of heads breaking resonated one after the other. Despite being overwhelmed by military strength, the witches did not flee.

At that moment, a realization like an electric current passed through my body.

“.....!”

Was that it.

They were setting up preparations to allow the main force to pull out right away.

In order for the enemy troops to withdraw, for the sole reason to gain more time to retreat, they had dispatched these witches. By throwing the deceased heads, they threatened us. While we were mingling with the witches and shrinking back from the threat, the enemy forces were most likely retreating on the other side of the night horizon.

“General!”

A captain shouted.

Two witches were rushing towards me.

Surprised by their sudden drop, the crossbowmen desperately fired the bolts that they had loaded previously. One of the witches' heads was pierced by a bolt and met her end. However, the other witch was still alive and came towards me while pulling out a sword.

“Heub!”

Metal sharply collided against one another. I had raised my longsword and received the witch's slash.

Although the witch's physique was much smaller than me, so her

strength was not that impressive, that single blow, which also contained the force accumulated from flying with her broom, was powerful.

Shifting the strength of the blow to my side, I rolled back. The witch immediately flung herself at me. Since the witch stuck close to me, while we exchanged blows with our blades, the soldiers around us could not approach.

“Ahahah! Aha, ahah hahahaha—!”

The witch let out an insane laughter.

Her appearance looked as if she was barely over 10-years-old.

There was an arrow already impaled into the chest of this girl with platinum blonde hair. Every time she swung her blade, blood flowed from her wound. That should be painful enough to drive one mad, and yet, the witch simply laughed. In order to not give the witch the opportunity to intonate a spell, I cornered her with my sword. And then, at the moment a gap was made, I struck the witch's stomach with my left fist.

“—Pa, ha.”

Unable to withstand my strike, the witch was blown away.

The witch's body went over the rampart and fell to the bottom of the wall.

The crossbowmen stuck to the edge of the rampart and started to fire downwards. The air was silent in the areas where the bolts passed through. The witch did not rise up once more. Since the sound of a head cracking was not heard, I conjectured that she was able to avoid death.

“General, are you alright!?”

“Can you not tell by looking at me? I have not aged to the point

where I would get done in by a young girl.”

I sheathed my sword.

In the distant night sky, the witches that had survived were fleeing. It seemed six or seven of the 20 witches had died. Seeing that the escaping shadows were small in number, it was pitiable.

“All forces, open the fortress gates and sortie! The enemy troops are planning to escape while using the witches as a scapegoat in order to distract us. Blow the horns!”

After repelling the witches, the soldiers cried out. The mages shot fireballs into the night sky to celebrate our victory.

In this cloudy night, the explosion of the fireballs could be seen vividly. Influenced by that vivid light, our soldiers forgot about the cold, forgot about death, and went through the gates. The company commanders and adjutants ran around the dim grounds to organize the ranks. I mounted a white horse and went to the front.

There was no doubt.

After hearing that their main attack force was defeated, the Demon Lord was planning to evacuate back to the demon territory.

Since he had no confidence in facing us and also had no determination to hold out, by blaming it on the defeat of the other unit, he most likely intended to draw back entirely.

“Follow me!”

There was no time to lose.

If Dantalian is able to retreat safely, then that would not be my victory. The triumph will go solely to the Imperial Princess.

Because the Imperial Princess had won, the enemy troops had retreated. If I were to spectate here then I would descend into being a

mere fool who had lost the Black Fortress and was only able to take it back thanks to the Imperial Princess. If that were to happen, then this war would be completely decorated as the Imperial Princess' victory. That must not happen!

Someone must block the Imperial Princess' lead. If it is not obstructed, then no one could know when that lead would turn into a flood. When the Imperial Princess dethrones her own father for the name of glory, and when she purges her own brother with the justification of victory, in these situations, who could possibly condemn her? If no one is able to do this, then there is no other choice but for me to step forward.

Since that is the duty of a noble.

Since that is my mission as a Rosenberg.

For the peace of the Empire, and for my vengeance, Demon Lord Dantalian, you shall fall in these Black Mountains tonight.

□ The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 3, Day 1
The Black Mountains, mountain pass

20 witches had gone out and 12 had returned. All 12 witches had their chests penetrated and were bleeding.

I could not see Humbaba among them.

“.....”

Feeling wretched, I could not ask where Humbaba was. I could only ask if they could continue fighting. If the witches were to say that it would be difficult, then I planned to exclude them from the battle.

“Can you fly again?”

“We shall repay our master’s kindness with our lives.”

The witches knelt down in the snow with their bloody bodies. In the places where their blood dripped, holes were made in the snow. Glancing down at those red holes, I vowed. At any cost, I shall obtain victory in this battle.

Although our forces were in the possession of 50 witches, I had purposely sent only 20 in order to lure out the enemy. The 20 witches had accepted that irrational command without a word. And without a word, 9 of them had fallen to their demise. What the 9 had thought as they felt the cold winter air for the final time, and how solitary they must have felt as they descended to the boundlessly dark abyss by their lonesome, I could not dare measure that emotion. They had died for me.

I quietly commanded the captains.

“Rely on the wooden fences. The enemy will situate their cavalry at the front and charge at our forces. It will be over if you yield from those fences. The spearmen shall protect the crossbowmen, and the crossbowmen shall depend on the spearmen. Rely on one another and hold out together.”

The captains repeated the orders and ran out to the front lines.

From a distance, the sound of hooves reverberated and shook the earth. As the hooves raised clouds of snow from the ground, the enemy cavalry drew near. In this dark night, their figures could not be seen in detail but instead appeared as one huge mass, like a single giant shadow. Between the shadows, the sharp sound of horns was mixed. Hooves, snow dust, and horns were chaotically fused together, making it appear as if it was not a thousand, but ten thousand that were approaching us.

“Blow the horns.”

Our buglers blew their breaths into their horns. In the night sky, the respiration of the enemy soldiers and the breaths of our forces intermingled, and the witches flew up into that sky once more.

In the sky resonating the sound of horns, the witches and mages crossed paths. And on the ground trembling by the hooves, infantry and cavalry clashed. Blood that burst forth from the sky scattered downwards and the blood surging from the ground shot upwards. The world was soaked in blood.

A captain’s adjutant shouted.

— Your highness, it’s the enemy infantry!

The moonlight faintly displayed the enemy soldiers on the other side of the mountain pass. Although their faces could not be seen, the

spears which they were holding shined brightly in the dim light. My center army consisted of 2,500 soldiers, but it appeared that the enemy soldiers reached around 5,000 if they added the cavalry together with the infantry.

Though the wooden fences, which our troops were relying on, were sturdy, the amount we had was low. There were large gaps placed between each fence. The enemy cavalry continuously pressed their horses towards those spots. Our spearmen were slowly being pushed back. A spear thrust out by an enemy cavalry pierced the head of one of our infantrymen. The spearhead went through their eye and came out from the back of their head.

After mounting a horse and staring out onto the battlefield, I spoke calmly.

“Endure. We will survive if you endure. If you yield, then we will all perish.”

I felt bitter about my helplessness. In this grim night, the soldiers were all respectively alone. On their own, our soldiers managed the shadows of the enemy which approached them like a flood. As battles were carried out by the soldiers and not myself, I could not die in their steads, and that task of dying was solely taken by the soldiers.

Our troops fell head first into the snow and died. As long as they were not allies, the enemy forces stepped on the corpses and buried them further into the snow. The hair of the half-buried corpses shook due to the wind. Since their corpses were firm, no type of flowery words could remain. Death was something that denied words.

I gazed at the pine forest to the left of the battlefield. Farnese was most likely hiding there while holding her breath. It felt like I could feel her breathing as she stared like a wolf at the battlefield with her green eyes.

Whether I fell first, whether the enemy soldiers could break through our defenses first, or whether Farnese enveloping the enemy soldiers from behind would come first, I could not grasp how the

sequence was going to end up. Everyone was alone in this night battle. I repeated the same words I had said a moment ago.

“Endure. We will survive if you endure.”

□ The Northern Guardian, Margrave of Rosenberg, Georg von Rosenberg
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 3, Day 1
The Black Mountains, mountain pass

“Attack! Do not rest and continue to rage!”

Our infantry rushed forward one after the other. There was no time for rest. Until the night was over, there was going to be no breaks. Before we have destroyed the wooden pickets, massacred the enemy soldiers, and have achieved victory by taking the head of the Demon Lord, there will be no pause until then. Kill them, tear them, and rip them to pieces..... Commands that were not words, but were instead, nothing more than an explosion of sounds, came pouring out.

A blind arrow flew towards me and grazed my shoulder. Blood flowed and my body felt warm. The captains were unaware of my injury. Good. It was better off like this. It was much better that they did not know of my scratch. Is this not what night battles were? I shouted out the burning energy that was boiling inside me.

“Crush them!”

Words disappeared from the battlefield and only noise echoed throughout. Spear! Spear.....! A knight who had dropped his weapon mid-charge started to call out. He grabbed a spear, unaware of who had given it to him, and resumed his assault. They were covered in the blizzard raised by the hooves of the horses, so the knights were not clearly visible. Once again, someone shouted, Spear.....! Spear.....! and was consumed by the snow. I could see something vividly on the backs of the mounted troops who were charging in to be consumed by the blizzard. Although I was unsure of what it was, I was certain that it was something that surpassed words. That was, perhaps, a part which was in the blind spot of life. The blindness of

life.

The captains spoke.

“There are fewer enemy soldiers than predicted, general.”

“And we can’t see the enemy’s cavalry as well.”

I nodded my head.

“It appears to be less than 3,000. The Demon Lord must have run away with his Royal Guards beforehand. Those men are resisting in order to give the Demon Lord time to escape.”

My prediction was on the mark.

Dantalian responded quickly to the news of Marbas’ defeat. While sending out the witches to employ a smokescreen tactic, Dantalian retreated with his main force. If I had waited until dawn, then the Demon Lord’s main force would have gotten all the way back to the Black Fortress without receiving any harm.

Oh, how unfortunate, Dantalian.

Your anxiety has ruined you. Rather, if it were not for you having sent out your witches, then I would have most likely waited until dawn. This was most likely what it meant for the biter to be bitten.

Even if Dantalian were able to get away with his guards, it was fine.

Although it was regretful that we were going to be unable to fulfill the quota for Demon Lords

, just annihilating this main force of his would be quite the large exploit.

My biggest goal was to prevent the Imperial Princess from holding a monopoly on the laurels of victory. I was satisfied with achieving this.

“We have breached the wooden fences!”

“General, our infantry have broken through!”

The captains got excited.

Primarily, our forces overwhelmed the enemy with numbers. Like how a person would latch onto a log if they had fallen into a river, the enemy soldiers were relying on that feeble fence and holding out.

Since the enemy troops were in the middle of withdrawing, they were unable to properly set up their fences, and now, the already few amount of pickets they were able to put up had collapsed. What could the enemy rely on now? Be swept up in the flood of our soldiers and drown!

“Please give us the order to carry out an all-out attack, general!”

“Allow us to take part in the glory of a great victory!”

“Mm. Go.”

I nodded my head in approval.

Letting out a roar, the captains waved their flags. Finally, our reserve troops advanced to the front line as well. The sound of horns resonated.

Each company’s horn had a different tone, but the battlefield was too disorderly to distinguish the tones. This chaos will soon end once the battle was over.

—

Between the noise, a certain pitch came into my ear. Indeed, it was the sound of horns.

However, it felt like that sound was further and higher up than the others.

— Buuu.....

I was at least certain that the sound was not coming from our troops. Was the sound coming from the demons? If that was so, then the noise should have been coming from up ahead, and yet, I was hearing the sound from the forest on the other side. Following the noise, I gazed at the pine tree grove.

— Buuuuuu, buuu.....

The sound drew closer. It was approaching faster than the speed of an average person's gait. The horn was not being blown by infantry but by cavalry. The moonlight slipped between the gaps in the clouds. In the forest that was being faintly lit, the branches on the pine trees shook. The pine trees shuddered and brushed off the snow.

Receiving the snow falling from the branches, a girl emerged from the pine grove.

The girl was riding on a black horse. She lightly shook off the snow that had fallen onto her head. Following the movement of the girl, the black horse snorted. A blizzard was raging, but the flurry aimed away from the girl, making her the sole clear person in the center of the violent winter wind.



“.....”

The girl glanced towards this direction. It felt as if she had met my gaze, however, I did not feel her gaze with my eyes, but with my entire body instead. Her eyes were emotionless and indifferent like the winter. She simply held her position like the wind. The girl opened her mouth.

The words which she had uttered were most likely these.

— Slaughter them.

That was it.

The moment her words flowed into the air.

The sound of horns raged.

— Buuuuuuuuu.

A countless number of demon cavalry emerged from the pine grove. Centaurs born with the faces of humans and the legs of horses let out a battle cry. The demon cavalry leaped over our rear, the wooden fences, and advanced further to lash the back of our troops.

Because they were suddenly caught from behind, our military personnel were thrown into confusion. Although they hastily attempted to set up a defense, there was no space. The wooden fences were interfering. Due to the immense shock, I could only watch the sight of my soldiers running about in confusion and drift further apart.

The captains whom I could command, and the captains who would listen to my orders and pass them on, were not at my side. Above all else, everything was already too late. Even if I were to run into that chaotic battlefield, even if I put my life on the line, I could never turn the progress of this battle now. The intuition which had been with me throughout my entire life declared.

That this was my defeat.

Aah.

Aaah—.

Our soldiers kept being pushed into a corner. Trying to hide behind the wooden pickets, the soldiers conflicted against one another. The wooden fences were unable to handle the struggle and had collapsed. The men tumbled onto the ground and sprayed out snow as they hit the earth. The soldiers flailed while on top of the snow.

The girl was still standing tall at the edge of the forest and looking down at the battle. The breath flowing from her lips rose upwards. She did not move. It felt as if the battleground was completely irrelevant to the girl.

Oh, Gods.

How could you have, to a Devil?

How could you have allowed a Devil to triumph?

Is it to fulfill your justice here on our land? Is the defeat of this old man proper in your righteousness? Is it your grand design to allow that Demon Lord, who had slaughtered, burned, and ridiculed innocent prisoners, to achieve victory?

“.....”

I stared up at the sky.

The witches and mages were fighting intensely in the night sky. However, the intensity that the witches were once receiving had turned around at some point, and now the mages were enduring the ferocity. The witches, whose numbers were once lower than 20, now appeared as if there were over 30. Our mages fell. They fell with their heads cut and their arms severed. They had become a red winter flower and were plucked petal by petal.

So I was deceived.

I was deceived so I have lost.

And since I have lost, I should die.

“.....”

I put on my helmet.

Frozen by the winter wind, the helmet was cold. The frigid sensation from the iron burrowed deep into my head and into my thoughts. While forgetting about the Gods and dismissing justice from my mind, I simply glared at the path to rush ahead.

The young lad grabbed my reigns.

“Your honor, where are you planning to go.....?”

“I am afraid of the humiliation I will receive for returning alive. You can leave. Ride my reserve horse and go far away.”

The lad did not leave. He got on the reserve horse and pulled out a sword. I could not stop him.

After we turned the heads of our horses and rushed into the enemy forces, the lad was the first to fall due to being shot by arrows. He had endured 3 bolts. Subsequent to an arrow piercing his throat, the lad

rolled off from his saddle. I had yet to fall so I continued my advance.

At that moment, someone shouted towards me.

“Why, is it not the margrave!”

“.....!”

My eyes were dragged by the voice that I could not dare forget.

Over a wall of men and horses, Demon Lord Dantalian was mounted on a horse.

The Demon Lord widely grinned.

“Where are you going in such a rush, margrave! Is the night sky not beautiful and the snow marvelous? Is the blood of the soldiers sprayed across everything not splendid as well? If you are in such a hurry, then you may miss all of these sceneries. Go with more leisure!”

“.....You, bastard.”

“Ah, the margrave may be a bit too old to enjoy the scenery. You may have shat and pissed yourself because of all the surprising events that have happened tonight. But do not worry. I am courteous to the elderly, after all. I shall receive all of your shit and piss.”

Dantalian burst out laughing towards the sky.

“Please do not decline. Do we not have a special tie between us, margrave?”

“You scoundrel—!”

I charged towards the location the Demon Lord was at with my horse.

The centaurs quickly came at me in order to protect the Demon Lord.

As I desperately slashed and beheaded centaurs, something powerful collided against the back of my head. My head throbbed and I lost my balance.

My face became enveloped by the cold snow. While feeling my face become cold and the back of my head become hot, I closed my eyes.

The sound of the Imperial Princess' empty laugh brushed past my ear.

— Sir Rosenberg, Sir Rosenberg. Oh, Sir Rosenberg.....

And then I lost consciousness.

□ **The Northern Guardian, Margrave of Rosenberg, Georg von Rosenberg**

Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 3, Day 1

The Black Mountains, mountain pass

—The moment I opened my eyes, the sight of a man and multiple girls sitting down and leaning against one another came into my vision. The man was wearing black clothes. He was slowly stroking a girl with platinum blonde hair who was using his lap as a pillow.

I was unsure of what she was so ecstatic about, but the girl kept rubbing her cheek against the man's lap. There was a bandage wrapped around the girl's head.

On the man's other side, there was another girl seated beside him. The sound of pages from a book being flipped could be heard.

I closed my eyes once and opened them again. Was this reality? Was this a hallucination? The world surrounding them was pure white as it was covered in snow. The sunlight was reflected irregularly so the border between reality and hallucination became faint.

—?

—

They whispered in words that I could not understand. The platinum blonde haired girl kept laughing, the man laughed occasionally, and the blonde girl did not laugh at all. In that location, they were all melted together as one.

From a distance, a pink haired girl approached while holding a platter. The man and the girls received a plate of food from the platter. At that moment, the pink haired girl pointed towards my direction and muttered something. The man looked at me.

Splash

Lukewarm water drenched my head. I coughed and raised my body. Blood was mixed into my coughs.

After spitting out some blood, my head became clear and my vision distinct. The man and the girls were not sitting in the center of sunlight. There was an endless number of corpses spread out around them.

“Margrave, I see you are alive.”

The man spoke.

“Consider it a fortune that your life line is long. If Humbaba here had died, then you would have died by my hands as well.”

“.....”

I spat out the blood in my mouth and spoke.

“Why did you spare me?”

“I did not spare you. You survived absolutely on your own. Although we had used ropes to bind you, who had fallen on the battlefield, that was it. We did not cure or take care of you.”

You survived on your own.

My heart felt numbed by the Demon Lord’s words. What was I trying to accomplish by surviving? Exactly what hidden part of my mind struggled desperately to stay alive?

“.....What do you plan to do with me?”

“I am your enemy, and you are also my enemy. Since there are no relations as tied together as ours, I give you my sympathy.”

The Demon Lord chuckled.

“Respecting one’s elders is an etiquette that surpasses both race and nationality. I shall release you.”

I was stifled.

The girls lined up beside the man were gazing this way with stoic faces.

It felt as if their expressionless faces were the naked face of death.

“.....Kill me. Take my life instead.”

“Take a strong hold of your mind, margrave. Since you have survived on your own, should you not die on your own as well? Ah, it would be unwieldy to drag around an old man on my own. I shall place one of your horse attendants as your servant. Do not be so disappointed.”

“The soldiers..... what happened to my officers and men?”

“They all died.”

“Nonetheless, are there not fellows who had survived?”

Dantalian smiled.

“We killed them all.”

Aah.

I vomited out blood. My internal organs surged in reverse. After heaving out something soft and wet, I lost consciousness once more.

Oh Gods.

Oh Gods.

▯ **The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian**
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 3, Day 1
The Black Mountains, mountain pass

While glancing at the margrave being taken away on a stretcher, Lapis spoke.

“Your highness. Is there a reason why you are sparing that one’s life? Rosenberg is a prestigious family among prestigious families, that has fought against the Demon Lord armies for generations. If your highness takes that man’s neck then that grandeur will shake the entire world.”

“That is why I must not take his neck.”

I softly brushed the hair of Humbaba who was lying on my lap. Humbaba mewled while imitating the sound of a cat. A scout had discovered Humbaba, who had fallen in the snow near the White Fortress, and brought her back. Fortunately, her wounds were not severe. I asked if Humbaba had something she wished for. She answered immediately.

— A lap pillow!

I more than gladly accepted this modest request. Lapis as well did not say anything in criticism for this occasion. We all acknowledged the contributions made by the witches. One day, I shall console the witches with a true reward that is not something like a mere lap pillow. While smiling, I spoke.

“Marbas was defeated and even Barbatos has been pushed into a

corner. How could I triumph so grandly on my own while the progress of the war is this tragic? I will stick out. A person who sticks out will be struck. Although we are sending Rosenberg back alive.....”

Rosenberg will be driven to death by the Imperial Princess anyway.

I swallowed those words down. That was a line that I had no reason to go out of my way to say. I placed words that were less suspicious on my mouth.

“The territory which Rosenberg rules over shall soon be land occupied by us, anyway. If we were to take the life of the lord respected by his subjects, then we will only raise their anger. For the future when we rule over them, I must be tolerant.”

I wonder if she had accepted that answer. Lapis did not question further. I spoke.

“Inform Barbatos of our victory. Furthermore, include a calumny requesting that she should clean those lips of hers since I will be going to assist her.”

“.....”

Lapis narrowed her eyes.

“Your highness, you always emphasize that you despise women with small chests, but in truth, is that not a lie? It seems as if quite the amount of your highness’ mind resides in Barbatos. This one is holding doubts.”

How noisy.

Farnese leaned against me and silently read her book, and Humbaba purred with her head placed on my lap. I reckoned I should indulge in the antics of these two for today.

□ **The Northern Guardian, Margrave of Rosenberg, Georg von Rosenberg**
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 3, Day 1
The Black Mountains vicinity

“.....”

Once I opened my eyes again, I found myself lying on a bed.

According to the horse attendant, who had followed me as a valet, he claimed that the witches had taken and dropped us off at a nearby village. This was the village chief's room, and after sleeping for half a day, I was barely able to regain my senses. When I asked him about what had happened to the rest of my men, the soldier lowered his head. I could not ask anything.

Supported by the attendant, I left the village chief's house.

The village was at the foot of the mountains. Strangely, the town was quiet. At dawn, due to the sound of gunpowder exploding at the White Fortress, the village people had evacuated. Since the place of evacuation was incommodious to the old village chief, he said that he had stayed at home. It seemed the chief had realized that I was a lord.

Once we neared the entrance of the village, the Black Mountains could be seen clearly. The White Fortress was enveloped in an inferno. The flames from the fortress stuck fast to the foot of the mountain, and from the foot, a path of flames stretched upwards to the peak, making the Black Mountains become a burnt pitch black.

Putting these flames behind them, an army of thousands was leaving towards somewhere. They were truly leaving. Although I could not tell where they were going towards, it was certain that it was not to the demon territory but towards the humans'.

I sunk into the snow-covered ground and cried out for a long time. My knees trembled and my vocal cords became torn.

.....Ah, is this life? Are you telling me that this is also life?

I am a human. However, I am a traitor who had made the humans fall. I was a traitor who was a thousand times more heinous than a turncoat who had sold out their own country. The land was now going to be trampled by the foreign enemies. Moreover, it was a land where countless more humans will be born and raised in. Because of this old man, the young ones, who were going to be born and raised from now on, were going to be trampled before they could bloom. What am I to do about this? What can I do.....?

I was barely able to stand once night had arrived. Tearing the lower end of my clothes, I used that torn piece of clothing as parchment and borrowed a writing utensil from the village chief. I handed the report to the soldier and sent him away first. I told him to go first and inform the Imperial Princess of our defeat. The lines that I had written while enduring the trembling in my fingers were this.

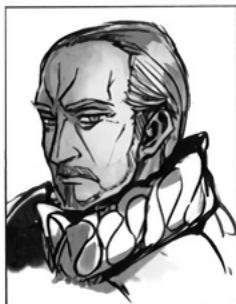
— 3rd month, 1st day. Enemy forces have captured the White Fortress. Military strength approximately 4,000. Demon Lord Dantalian is the commander. Our forces were annihilated.

When I wrote the line that our troops were annihilated, my body shook.

I cursed my destiny that had allowed me to age until I was an old man. However, because I did not say the things I should have said, I was cornered this far, and since writing the things that I must write

was the last task bestowed upon me, I wrote the rest.

— 3rd month, 1st day. Enemy forces have captured the White Fortress. Military strength approximately 4,000. Demon Lord Dantalian is the commander. Our forces were annihilated. The mountain range is burning.



Georg von Rosenberg

Race

Human

Job

Lord (A+)

Reputation

Lord of the Three High
State Councillors.

Leadership

Rank A

Might

Rank B+

Intelligence

Rank B

Politics

Rank B+

Charm

Rank B+

Technique

Rank D

Titles

The Northern Guardian,
Controller of Strongholds.

Abilities

Horsemanship S,
Logistics A,
Swordsmanship B+,
Tactics B.

Skills

A Green Old Age (B)

[Achievements: 31]

Translator's Notes

1. This is a rather important note. Up until now, the margrave had used a superior way of referring to himself. However, it's a word that doesn't exist in the English language and isn't something as obnoxious as using the 'Royal we'. It's similar to how Lapis would always refer to herself as 'this one' when talking to people of authority. He used a word similar to 'main body/center/duce' instead of using the word 'I', and would always do it in his monologue too. If need be, I'll go back on a later date to change all that, but for now, the reason why I'm telling you guys this is because of the final part of this chapter.

When he monologue'd this line, "I was barely able to stand once night had arrived.", he actually corrects himself from calling himself 'main body', and simply refers to himself as 'I'. Meaning he has accepted the fact that he had lost and that he doesn't deserve to be referred to in a high manner anymore.

Chapter Four

FOG OF WAR

We were given a single mission.

Go north.

Go north and rescue Barbatos.

The amount of rest given to our soldiers was half a day. We pillaged the supplies that were piled up like a mountain within the White Fortress, and since it would be beyond our capacity to pillage everything, we burned the rest. While we were burning the supplies, which we originally planned to use to feed and clothe the prisoners, we also decided to burn the captives as well.

Since that would be more efficient.

I ordered for cruelty.

“Set ablaze every single human village we see on our path.”

Flames and smoke were present wherever my army went. My soldiers marched as they set ablaze everything that lay in our path, and marched while placing the smoke behind them. We advanced strenuously in order to provide aid for Barbatos.

The humans desired to push the assault back to the demon territory. Since war was an occurrence that trampled over the land which they took place in, the humans wished for the land of the demons to be trampled instead of their own.

Now, during the current situation where the second army had completely fallen, the only person blocking the path of the massive human army was Demon Lord Barbatos. Barbatos was barely obstructing the human army of 40,000 with her own 20,000 soldiers. Providing aid for Barbatos was a major task. That way, the demon territory could avoid the terrible disaster of war. Barbatos and

I will not become the renegades who had brought upon this war.

“Do not become obsessed with pillaging! Kill them if you wish to take their lives, but do not waste your energy in slaughter. We do not have the time to rape so manage your lower bodies fairly. Burn all the human towns and turn those villagers into the homeless.”

I did not have even a touch of hesitation. Burn everything. Set ablaze everything in sight. The villages and supplies which we do not burn will become the lifeline that will feed the enemy. I was executing a cheongya^[1] tactic in reverse.

Occasionally, the elders of the villages would be driven mad by the pent-up frustration and beg to us. The elders pleaded that they at least needed the seeds if they wished to carry out the first tilling during the upcoming spring, so they begged for us to not tear out their hopes to survive by the roots. I did not have the time to explain to the elders the urgency of our situation. Their circumstances should not be mine and my circumstances should not be theirs, so I did not have the time to make our misaligned circumstances interlock. Even if I did have enough time, that was a difficult dislocation to fix. I browbeat the elders.

“Then will you die? Would you rather die instead? Listen to me carefully, humans. Until the winter is over, run away to the mountains and do not come down. The farming this year has come to an end, so do not hold any lingering attachment. Do not return from the mountain valleys!”

With tears in their eyes, the old men and women departed to find refuge.

The smoke rising from the Black Mountains was moving ever so slightly, but with certainty, towards the north. As each day passed, the villages that laid on our northward path were turned into flames.

People overflowed from the towns where only ashes remained. The humans who had lost their homes escaped towards the south or hid

in the mountains. The smoke was dense on all sides. The sound of crying and weeping echoed throughout the areas where the fumes were thick. They should consider it a fortune that the snow and rain that fell during our march of arson was light. If it had become difficult to set things ablaze because of the weather, then I would have killed every single human.

The refugees sang as they departed.

If we go now, when will we return

If we go now, when will we return

Our villages are burning and our sons are burning

Aha, if we go now, then when will we return.....

When they had no path to tread and no destination to arrive at, it seemed humans relied on songs on their road of departure. Although the song was sorrowful and foolish, I did not stop them. If anything, I shoved the backs of the humans. Run away, spread it, spread the song wide, inform the people with a song that we have arrived as your plague.....

En route, the army of the dukes blocked our path. They were soldiers who had ran away from their strongholds because they were unable to endure the bitter song of the people. However, this was after the dukes had offered the majority of their military personnel to the Imperial family in order to provide military assistance. Although their spirit was praiseworthy, solely their spirit was what could be complimented. While slightly glancing at the enemy forces that barely reached 50 soldiers, Farnese asked.

“What should we do, lord?”

“Trample over them.”

“Understood.How tiresome.”

While muttering about how bothersome it was, Farnese commanded our troops.

Since our victory was much too apparent, Farnese devised a game. It was a play to see how she could kill all 50 enemy soldiers without missing a single one. While testing all kinds of tactics, Farnese taunted the enemy. The game was a success. The soldiers were wiped out completely.

We severed the heads of the so-called soldiers and dangled them on poles. Every time we burned a village down, we threw in about 15 heads. After seeing those heads, the elderly folks listened to our words a slight bit better. Without having the need for us to verbally threaten them, they packed their stuff on their own discretion in order to find refuge. It was straight forward. I should have done this sooner.

We were without a doubt a Demon Lord's army.

If one were to express it a bit more accurately, then we were an army of bastards.

Our military personnel considered the fact that they were bastards as something to be proud of. As we pillaged more, our soldiers formed a stronger army. Marching was not painful.

Our own soldiers would give our army titles, such as ‘The Harbingers of Winter’, ‘The Human's Plague’, and ‘The Pillagers of Mountains’. Since the winter was something that was damned, the plague was something to be sworn at, and pillaging was a vile thing to do, one could know how dastardly my army was. How cheer-worthy. Aha, how anarchistic. It was a good season.

My life was more than just miserable, so I would sing about my forlornness. The refugees sang because they did not know where to go, and I sang because I did not know where I had come from. The

song of a person who had nowhere to go and the song of a person who had nowhere to return were completely different.

“What shall it be: this or that–? The walls behind the temple of the city’s deity have fallen – shall it be this–? When they die and die again a hundred times–. Or if we die and die together nonetheless – shall it be that–?”[\[2\]](#)

“.....What in the world is that song? It is bizarre.”

Farnese furrowed her brows. Lapis, who was riding beside me on her horse, also gave me a weird look. I made up a lie.

“These are the lyrics from a melody which I had heard in my dream last night. The beat twines around my tongue so well that the song flows naturally. Would this not be a tune blessed to us by the Goddess?”

“Hm.”

“Try singing along. It is a song that casually unburdens one’s life. Songs are sung to savor the taste of doing something that is heavy but with lightheartedness. What shall everything in the world be: this or that?”

The song instantly circulated among the soldiers. “They say that this is a song that Our Liege the Demon Lord made after personally hearing it from the Goddess herself”, a premium attached to this groundless rumor. Once I included a trot-like[\[3\]](#) rhythm to the song and recited it, our soldiers tossed away military songs and giggled at the trot. Our troops altered the lyrics to match their taste.

Badum tat badum tat what shall it be: this or that?

Badum tatat tat burn the temples and slaughter the people – shall it be this?

When they die and die again a hundred times

Or if we die and die together nonetheless – shall it be that?^[4]

Our officers and men chanted, slaughtered, pillaged, and committed arson. With a 'koong chuck', an excited air blew as they swung their blades, and with another 'koong chuck', they hummed as they put down the flames. Every time the chant was sung, blood was splattered.

As we advanced further north, the four-beat drum tune became convivial. The witches were the ones most giddy about the trot and let out a whimsical vibe. While riding on their brooms, the witches flew low and sang the chorus. Below the witches, the soldiers sang along while treading the ground. As the chorus and repetition were going back and forth, our march proceeded quickly.

The song of refugees spread to the south. The song of invaders dug its way into the north. The anthem of refugees was the weeping of the people, and the anthem of pillagers was the gaiety of the people, so I did not differentiate the two. I simply considered them all as the people. While being enshrouded by the smoke rising from the flames, we spread the melody.

While all of our troops were going along with the rhythm, solely Lapis remained cold. Lapis firmly refused to sing.

“That is a bad habit.”

It was honestly an accurate discernment.

3rd month, 11th day.

Before the 13th day that Barbatos had made us vow.

We had grabbed the enemy's blockade by the nape.

▯ **The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian**
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 3, Day 11
Neris Plains

“—Break through them.”

I spoke while pointing towards the enemy encirclement.

To the people, words followed the world and were changed according to their lives. However, for the individuals in power, the world followed words, and the lives of others changed according to the words spoken by the figures of authority. I was a man of influence. I ordered them to break through, thus it happened.

Humbaba led the other witches and carpet-bombed the enemy. We had plundered so much gunpowder from the White Fortress that we were now nearly overflowing with it. The witches scattered the pouches of gunpowder without reserve. Soon after, the mages on the enemy forces' side flew up into the air to retaliate.

The enemy troops were many and our forces were few. Regardless, the enemy soldiers were spread out vastly in order to form an encirclement. Our forces retracted and stabbed into a single point. The enemy was dispersed and we were focused. The enemy forces had to keep an eye out for both the outside and inside of their encirclement, while all we had to do was rush forward while only looking ahead. As if hammering a nail into a plank of wood, Farnese hammered our soldiers into the blockade. Excluding this, there was no other plot or unusual wit. It was a powerful frontal attack.

Farnese uttered.

“An army that wins through a frontal assault is a happy army.”

Her words became few when she was commanding. She would

only embed the tactics into the other captains during the strategy meetings, but during actual combat, she watched the battlefield with a flickering gaze.

Farnese would read battlefields as if she was looking at a book. It felt as if the soldiers' shouts, the movement of the unit, and the sound of horns all had a fixed meaning to her, and that meaning alluded to words and lines. When our soldiers' movements were vague, she spoke.

"Do not falter and go forth."

When the enemy forces endured tenaciously, she spoke.

"Hold out as well, and be resolute to shed your blood."

Once the enemy encirclement started to fall apart, she spoke again.

"Attack there."

Farnese read the battlefield as if it were a book, and as if she were correcting all the misprints within a paperback, she amended the errors on a battlefield with her orders. Her commands were precise, and therefore engraved deeply into our officers and men.

Without uttering a word, the captains held Laura De Farnese, who was gazing down at the back of their heads, with high esteem. They boasted that they were able to feel the acting general's gaze while they were fighting. From the captains to the privates, there was not a single person who doubted the general's words. I recalled the words of a genius mathematician who claimed that the entire world appeared as numbers to him. To Farnese, the battlefield most likely appeared as words and sentences to her. A natural talent.

Before the 2-hour mark had passed since we had begun our assault on the blockade, Farnese nodded.

"It is over."

A crooked smile drifted over Farnese's lips.



5 minutes later, as she had stated, the encirclement collapsed. The enemy forces raised their flags and fled. Since their retreat appeared to be deliberate, Farnese forbade our troops from pursuing them thoughtlessly.

“Do not go after them. We will end up suffering instead.”

The captains kept silent and obeyed the order. It was a captain's joy to chase after remnant enemy troops, hit them from behind, and empty their pockets. Bewitched by that interest, the number of soldiers who preferred plundering over fighting was countless. However, Farnese was not a general who was stingy about looting. The captains, who had pillaged as much as they wanted to during our forced march here, understood the general's nature well. If Farnese told them to not pursue, then they must not pursue. It was a solemn rule.

After the enemy soldiers had withdrawn, as if curtains were being pulled aside, Barbatos' encampment was revealed. The person in charge of the campsite came out.

“Welcome, Dantalian. Thanks to you, we are able to survive another day.”

“I can only apologize for my belated arrival.”

“To say that you are late..... We did not have any expectation that someone would arrive in the first place.”

The supervisor smiled bitterly. There was blood smeared on the

supervisor's pure white beard. This man with the appearance of an old man was a Demon Lord, rank 16th Zepar.

“Although it would only be proper etiquette to treat you and your men to a banquet for having allowed us to escape death, disconcertingly, our current situation is unfavorable. I apologize. Nevertheless, if you had arrived a day later, we would have greeted you as blind corpses.”

“How could etiquette in war be the same as common civility? Let us not be concerned about such matters. There is not even the slightest reason for you to feel disconcerted, Duke Zepar.”

Rank 16th Zepar and I, who was rank 71st, conversed with one another while using a half-polite language. It may have gone against courtesy, but Zepar was the lord who had received salvation, and I was the lord who had given him that redemption. I was indirectly suggesting to him that this was what front line decorum was. Zepar must have understood my implication as he had nodded his head.

“Nevertheless, I feel quite ashamed to be welcoming you like this. What have we been doing while you, who possesses a low rank, were breaching through the mountain range and arriving to rescue us.....?”

“Duke Zepar, what part of that is your mistake? Since the lords of the Plains Faction have protected the demon continent, which had risen to extremities, the people will most definitely praise your efforts. All I have merely done was to very slightly assist the lords in helping their subjects. Now then, let us go.”

While exchanging words of blessing, Zepar guided us to the campsite.

The encampment was solitary. It was a campsite that relied solely on wooden fences and trenches. The fences had broken apart due to the repeated attacks which had unfolded for the past several days. On the wooden pickets, corpses were impaled through the abdomen and were hanging like laundry. Birds of prey landed on the corpses and

feasted on the most tender part of their flesh; the eyes. The blood oozed from the empty eye sockets of the blinded corpses. The moment we drew near, the birds flew away in alarm. As the birds fled, they dropped the torn apart eyeballs onto the earth. Zepar did not utter a word while going past the corpses of his men.

Witnessing my troops entering the camp, the soldiers who were still alive gathered. They cheered while raising their spears.

— Hoorah for His Highness Dantalian! Hoorah!

— Blessings to our savior!

The soldiers blocked our path so we were unable to move here or there. It was unimaginable for the faces of the soldiers who had survived purgatory to be beautiful. They were missing limbs and teeth and were dirty because of the grime which was smeared all over them. If there was something about them that was beautiful, then it was the bright smile that had formed on their faces. Zepar scolded the officers and men.

“What is this? No matter how delighted you all are, it is custom to not block the path of a king. Quickly.....”

“No, that is fine, Duke Zepar.”

I stopped him.

“It is a rule that a king who steps on the path of his people does not exist.”

I stepped down from my horse and embraced one of the soldiers. The soldier was a young orc. A strong pungent smell of horse feces, blood, and urine emanated from his body. I held the young orc close and kissed his forehead.

“You are all admirable. You are all praiseworthy. You all did a good job standing your ground. I am sorry that I was not able to arrive sooner. You did well.....”

The soldier burst into tears. After hearing my words, the other soldiers around me started to shed tears as well. They knelt around me and drenched the ends of my clothes with their tears. They cried profusely while muttering ‘your..... highness.....’. Zepar could not interfere with the soldiers who were crying because they had survived. That was something that one could not dare impede in.

While the sound of crying was overflowing from the camp, a sharp voice cut in.

“Hey! Tall and feeble!”

It was Barbatos. She was standing beyond the lowered backs of the soldiers.

Barbatos jumped. As if she was crossing over stepping stones, she stepped on the backs of her soldiers and ran all the way to me. Because her behavior had no face or dignity, I was taken aback and my mouth hung agape. Barbatos embraced the me who was like that.

“I’m fucking thankful, you son of a bitch!”

“Uwaack!”

I lost my balance and nearly fell over. Barbatos chortled as she hung onto my shoulders and dangled.

“You crazy bastard, you dog-like bastard! You bastard who really arrives within six days because he was told to come within six days! You, you! Did you crawl here within six days because the mountains are like your front yard? You pretty bastard!”

“Uaaaack!”

I was forcefully kissed. In truth, this was not kissing but suckling.

There was no possibility that this was something beside suckling.

I, who had performed quite the romantic and dignified scene, was now twisting his neck in order to avoid displaying a public suckling exhibition. Barbatos' lips frequently missed. Once that happened, this girl got upset for some reason.

“Ah, damn it. Stay still.”

“Euub!?”

Barbatos grabbed my head with both her hands. Finally, she was able to shove her tongue into my mouth. That was the moment where the suckling had turned into a deep kiss. For someone who had the appearance of that of a child, her kissing capability was extraordinarily peerless. First, she took my breath and made the inside of my mouth into a vacuum. Having been smothered, I lost the strength in my tongue. Barbatos then enveloped her tongue around mine and sucked on it. Our lips went astray for an instant. In that moment, I inhaled sharply while letting out the sound ‘Heub... ha...!’. This was also for an instant. Soon after, Barbatos plugged my mouth once more, and this time, she pressed the center of my tongue with hers and stimulated it. Strength drained from my joints. Barbatos lightly caught and supported my body which was about to collapse since my knees had buckled. I’m going to be raped. These words went through my head. Truly. **I’m going to be raped today.** I honestly believed that I was going to be violated just like this. Barbatos, who was pressing the center of my tongue with hers, then wrapped her tongue around both sides of my own. Letting out a ‘Eub...’, I moaned. Did I just utter that moan? Did I truly? Was I going to be done in by a single tongue? No matter how much I moved both of my arms in order to push the other party away, it was pointless. Because I was unable to put strength into my arms, my flailing slipped. Barbatos smirked with her eyes. ‘How cute’. It felt like Barbatos was saying that. As if telling me to stop fussing, Barbatos lightly gripped my lower body with her left hand. Dear God. My vision became white. My final line of resistance had disappeared without a trace as well. There was no way to struggle here. My knees trembled in fear from

the technique of this perverted Demon Lord who had lived for hundreds of years. I could feel with my entire body what the term 'being eaten' meant. I am going to be eaten. That was a basic fear that humans retained towards beasts since the beginning of all things. I primitively trembled. God, please, just, seriously. Barbatos then mixed the techniques of pushing her tongue like a drill and capturing my tongue with hers like a rope together and stirred the inside of my mouth. It felt like a blender was whisking my brain.

“—Paha.”

At last, Barbatos removed her lips. A thin line of saliva hung loosely like a suspension bridge between my and Barbatos' tongue. While gasping heavily, I glared ferociously at Barbatos.

“You.....you really.....”

“Don't try to shrewdly steal the hearts of my men.”

Barbatos bit my earlobe and whispered.

“I'm thankful that you saved me, but that's it. Listen well. My soldiers are mine. The thing I despise the most are wastrels who mess with the things that are mine. Although this time, I'm letting you off with just this, but if you try to entice my subordinates ever again.....”

Barbatos' tongue licked the inner portion of my ear. That cold moist sensation sent a chill down my spine.

“Dantalian. At that moment, I'll really violate you while in front of the watchful eyes of the soldiers.”

“.....”

Hiccup.

“Your response?”

“I-I'll be careful.”

“Your plans tonight?”

Barbatos’ voice, which had asked me about my plans for tonight, was dripping with lust. If there was a color to one’s breath, then Barbatos’ breath would most likely be a light pink color right now. I hiccuped.

“Uh..... None?”

“Heeh. Then would you look at that? One was made just now.”

“Please wait a moment. Although I am unsure whether you are exhausted after having blocked the enemy’s continuous attack or not, how about getting some proper rest today?”

“Then since I’m tired, I guess I should improve my health by taking tonics?”

Gyaaaack.

“Every rational being in the world has the right of decision-making regarding their sexual behaviors within society. Barbatos, to your temptation, I shall adamantly refuse.....”

“Deny all you want. I’ll just refuse your refusal.”

This was not right.

Barbatos grabbed my right hand and started to drag me along. As I was being dragged, it felt as if I had become a slave who was being sold to another household due to a bad harvest. It was miserable and miserable again.

Thousands of soldiers vacantly watched the sight of me being dragged away. It was obvious what was going to remain in the minds of the soldiers today. The scene of His Highness Dantalian embracing the dirty bodies of the soldiers and crying for them had already fluttered away and evaporated. Only a single scene will remain within the soldiers and they will laugh and talk about it all night.

‘Her Highness Barbatos had devoured His Highness Dantalian!’

Like so.

With my final bit of hope, I gazed at Lapis, Farnese, and the witches. All of them disregarded my gaze. The witches even waved their arms as if they were the people of Pyongyang and were passionately seeing off their leader. The witches were beaming brightly.

— Be eaten well, your highness!

If my ear holes were still working correctly, then that was what the witches had distinctly shouted. Damn it. Just what country’s custom and what world’s moral principle was the courtesy of selling off one’s master and telling him to be eaten well. Since the three fundamental principles in human relations had collapsed and the Olympic rings have vanished, I shall see it as something you all had committed. Confucius and Mencius shall curse you all. Go die. All of you go die.....

□ The Northern Guardian, Margrave of Rosenberg, Georg von Rosenberg
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 3, Day 11
Neris Plains

The officers and men were unable to recognize me who had approached while walking with a cane. Even after I had shown the ring of the House of Rosenberg, the gatekeeper was still half in doubt. My appearance was dirty and shabby. Although I'm going to go and ask, don't expect too much, the gatekeeper uttered this and went to inform the people above of my arrival.

After a long time, a captain arrived while holding a rope used to bind criminals. It was a captain who I was an acquaintance with. Unable to treat me as a criminal, the captain stammered.

“They said the crime of bringing us defeat was atrocious.....”

“Did Her Highness the Imperial Princess order you to bind me?”

“My apologies, your honor.”

My throat was parched. I let out a dry cough. Ever since I was struck on the back of the head and had fallen into the snow, my coughs had become more frequent. This hacking cough which had found me after the age of 60 informed me of my age. The agedness I faced because I was old, was painful.

“What is there to apologize for. Tie me.”

“Please resent this captain.”

The captain bound both of my arms and guided me into the base. During the midday, the areas that the sunlight filled in the military base was vast. In each location where the sun shined down upon,

soldiers were gathered and sharing small-talk. Once a captain started leading an elderly man bound by rope, the soldiers turned to look this way. Someone must have recognized my old bones since my name had started to spread immediately.

— That's the Margrave of Rosenberg.

— Well, the reason our position was taken the other day.....

The officers and men whispered. It felt as if my body was completely in the open and my inner flesh was being revealed. The captain guided me not to the quarters used for war councils, but to the Imperial Princess' personal tent instead.

“I have brought the defeated general, your highness.”

Defeated general.

I shuddered. The disgrace I felt now sunk into a deeper corner of my psyche than it did while walking in front of the soldiers.

The Imperial Princess did not respond. Her shadow could be faintly seen through the white tent fabric.

“Your highness.”

The captain called out once more. No response. Feeling perplexed, the captain turned to look at me. It appeared the captain did not have the courage to press on and call for Her Highness the Imperial Princess, who was like the sky, for the third time. I cleared my throat.

“Your highness, this one is here to bow his head.”

“Enter.”

A refined voice flowed out from the tent.

With the steps of a criminal, I entered the quarters. The Imperial Princess was sitting at a desk and dealing with documents. At the center of the tent, steam was rising from a bucket full of hot water.

Even after we had entered, the Imperial Princess continued to only touch the documents. It appeared that being in her highness' tent for a long period of time was putting the captain under immense distress. Only the sound of a quill writing on parchment resonated throughout the tent. Even though time should be the same no matter what type of space you were in, the captain was unable to handle the time within this isolated space. The Imperial Princess spoke.

“You may leave now, captain.”

The captain quickly departed.

Only then, did the Imperial Princess stand up. Eyes that were as red as blood gazed at my face. There were no emotions there.

“Sir Rosenberg.”

“Yes, please speak, your highness.”

“Thou has lost.”

I dropped down to my knees.

“Do not forgive this one, your highness.”

“That is right. That is how you should behave. However, if I do not forgive you, then would the soldiers who have fallen come back to life? Would the penetrated mountain range be blocked once more? Our subjects, who have been burned to death, are still the people who have burned, and the soldiers, who have released the encirclement and have retreated, are still our soldiers who have fled.”

“.....”

“Why did you lose?”

In full detail, I told her about everything that I knew.

The Imperial Princess silently listened to my words. After hearing everything, she uttered.

“I see, so that man is Dantalian.”

“How does your highness know of such.....”

“An acquaintance of mine sent me some information. Have a look as well.”

The Imperial Princess pulled out a pocket watch from the inside of her clothes. Once she turned the hour hand of the clock, smoke started to leak out. A transparent screen was faintly displayed on the smoke. Memory Play artifact. It was a tool with an exorbitant price.

— Turn this place into Hell.

— Aha? By ‘Hell’, does master mean?

— I can smell a scent somewhere. It is the smell of fat emanating from disgusting masses of flesh. It is the smell of greed and hypocrisy.

My eyes shot open. Dantalian’s figure appeared on the screen. He ordered for a slaughter and a countless number of humans were killed off. I held my breath. The Imperial Princess turned the artifact off and questioned me.

“How is it? You must have seen this Demon Lord in person.”

“Yes..... Without a doubt, that is Demon Lord Dantalian.”

“Is there no possibility that they had acquired a man with the same face as Dantalian and made him act as the Demon Lord? Also, is there no chance that they had hired a large group of mages to enact

this performance while having disguised themselves?”

“The possibility of that being so is incredibly low. Your highness, this one recognizes the witch that appeared with the Demon Lord.”

“Who is it?”

“We had crossed swords several days ago. This one had even cut that girl down. If it were a performance, then it would be difficult to have a near identical appearance like that. Furthermore, the girl held within Dantalian’s arms is the Demon Lord’s general.”

The Imperial Princess placed her hand on her chin and went into thought.

“I had sent a person to Pavia to confirm this occurrence. Apparently, there was indeed an incident where the slave market was assaulted last autumn. The people of Pavia believe that it was the act of a wild demonic beast.”

“Your highness.”

“Demon Lord Dantalian most likely slaughtered the people deliberately, regardless of their race, in order to disguise the assault on the marketplace as an attack by beasts. Since both humans and demons had died indiscriminately, there was no other choice but to naturally see it as an act committed by demonic beasts.”

“.....”

“He is a cruel man, Sir Rosenberg.”

Cruel.

The Imperial Princess’ judgment was infinitely correct. Demon Lord Dantalian was a heartless man. There was no occasion of him having spared the lives of the humans he had captured as prisoners. If it were for victory, then he would calmly corner his subordinates into a deadly situation. Surely, without any room for doubt,

Dantalian was a villain who was most suited for the title 'Demon Lord'.

But why? Why did the scene I had witnessed, after having awoken from being unconscious, feel so sentimental? The scenery which I was uncertain on whether it was reality or a hallucination. Within the sunlight that was similar to fog, Dantalian and the girls were blended together like glares of light. That scene had become a single mystery and was imprinted into my cornea. The further I tried to push that scenery away from my head, the closer it got. However, even that closeness was too far for me to cross over. It felt as if that spot was nirvana.

“Rosenberg.”

“Yes, your highness.”

“Habsburg has already given you their faith once.”

The Imperial Princess lifted a dagger.

I slowly closed my eyes. I had come here resolute. The reason why I had not committed suicide was because my individuality considered suicide as an inviolable act. As dying voluntarily was one's own duty, it was something tremendously extravagant for a traitor who had disgraced his race and ruined his country. My death was no longer my own, and must be the punishment from the country. I have come here to die.

“Your Highness. Enact your justice.”

“.....”

Unexpectedly, the sound of empty laughter reached my ears.

The blade sliced into the air and cut the rope, freeing both of my hands. Feeling strange that my neck had not been severed yet, I opened my eyes. In front of me, the Imperial Princess was smiling.

“I am not going to take your life.”

“Your highness.....?”

“Your body is exceedingly dirty. Why is the margrave, which we only have four of in our empire, not properly maintaining his garment? The basis of one’s mind is in their body, and the basis of one’s body is in their clothes, so if the clothes are messy, then that reveals that the person’s mind is disorderly as well.”

The Imperial Princess undid my collar. Although I tried to back away, the Imperial Princess firmly gripped the edge of my clothes. It was disconcerting. There was no possibility that the Imperial Princess would desire for this old body, so I could not figure out the reason behind her current action.

“It is an order.”

“As a vassal, how could.....”

“Were you ever my vassal? Regardless, since you are a criminal of the empire, it would be difficult for you to oppose my words. Or perhaps, will you refuse the words of a lord with the body of a criminal?”

“.....”

I could not resist.

The Imperial Princess’ white hands went over my chest. As the buttons came undone, my coat slipped off.

Unbefitting of a lady who was born in the Royal Palace, the Imperial Princess’ hands were rough. I vaguely recalled the rumor that from a young age the Imperial Princess had learned how to catch fish from a fisherman, was taught how to hunt birds from a hunter, and learned how to plow fields from a farmer. The aristocrats talked in whispers that it was the Imperial Princess’ eccentric behaviors. The Imperial Princess’ fingers were coarse. This rough

sensation proved that the Imperial Princess' eccentric behaviors were not simply an act of delinquency because of a young age. While enduring the luxury of the Imperial Princess unclothing me, which was not a luxury, I spoke.

“Your highness, the alligator.....”

“Mm?”

“How did your highness learn how to butcher an alligator?”

“I saw the chef doing it in the Royal Palace.”

“Did the head cook teach your highness?”

“No. I did not receive any lessons. I merely watched.”

The Imperial Princesse pulled the wooden bucket close and dipped a washcloth into it. I was dumbstruck.

“Is your highness telling this one that you had learned the method of wielding the blade to skin leather through observation alone?”

“It is generally like that for me.”

With a splash, the Imperial Princess washed my body with the washcloth. My skin was arid and dry so it received the hot water well. I felt my skin breathing with gasps. As it continued to breathe, my mind became relaxed. The Imperial Princess comforted my exhausted back and shoulders with the towel.



Behind my back, the Imperial Princess spoke.

“Your body tells me of your life. It is proof that you have lived not with your head, but with your body.”

“That is something indecent for a criminal to hear. Please refrain from speaking such words, your highness.”

“Where did you acquire this stab wound on your back?”

“That is a scar this one had gained when this one was 18-years-old and had gone to a battlefield for the first time. While this one was running away in fear, this one was cut by a nameless person.”

“Aha. If it is 18-years-old, then that is the same as my current age.”

Although it was impious, a small laughter flowed from my lips. It was surprising that the Imperial Princess was 18-years-old and strange that I was already past the age of 60. Since the legacy I had walked down from the age of 18 to 60 was so distant, I laughed obscurely. This was something which I could only laugh vaguely about.

“Though the numbers could be nearly the same, this one does not believe that your highness’ feats can be approached by others.”

“You have yielded your allegiance to the Imperial Family for the past 60 years and have been faithful to your people for that long as well, but it seems merely being defeated twice is enough to ruin you. I will console your body.”

“.....”

“Your humiliation is your own and is something which I cannot cleanse. Therefore, since I cannot clean your mind, consider the thought that I am consoling you by cleansing your body. The path of consideration will at least not be solitary.”

I narrowed my eyes.

As the water flowed, hot steam rose upwards. The steam filled the tent like smoke. The smell of skin emanated from the steam. Whether the alligator, which had its skin peeled off personally by the Imperial Princess' hands, had enjoyed a deep luxury as an animal, or if I was enjoying a deeper luxury for having my body cleaned by the Imperial Princess as a vassal. I could not decide on which of those two were superior. While receiving the warm steam, I spoke.

“What should this one do?”

“I will lead the knights and withdraw. It is highly unlikely that Barbatos will leave us alone as we retreat. Her viciousness has most likely piled up to the point where she wishes to return to us all the beatings her forces had received up till now in full. You will block our rear.”

“Is your highness telling this one to die while defending?”

“I will not stop you.”

My body trembled.

The Imperial Princess brushed my shoulders with her bare hands. Because her coarse palms had grazed my skin, my inner flesh itched as well.

“However, it will not only be you. My brother shall be there as well. If you let the Crown Prince of the Empire die,

then you will most likely become known as a traitor for all of eternity

. But, if you are able to safely bring the Crown Prince southwards, then would that not also be a great meritorious deed?”

“.....Is your highness giving this one an opportunity?”

“I simply wish to give you an appropriate location.”

The Imperial Princess remarked.

“Even if you are to lose this time as well, I shall not punish the northern region. I swear on the name of Habsburg, so leave while bearing all of your humiliation alone.”

This was an extravagance that a criminal could not hope more for.

I lowered my head.

“These old bones will carry out your order, your highness.”

▯ **The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian**
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 3, Day 11
Neris Plains, Plains Army Encampment

“Shh.”

Barbatos woke me up.

“Quietly.”

My body had become exhausted after having played with Barbatos since midday, thus I had fallen asleep. Barbatos should also not be completely fine due to the exhaustion, but during the night, during this ambitious night where even the sound of birds could not be heard, she had woken me up. For reference, the people I despise the most in the world are the ones who wake me up while I am asleep. People who wake up others are all psychopaths and mental patients. I will accept no arguments.

“Is something the matter?”

“Follow me quietly.”

Barbatos lowered her voice and giggled. Although she had told me to follow her, she abruptly grabbed my hand and started to drag me along. Barbatos and I were currently in the state where we did not have even a single scrap of thread on us, thus meaning, we were naked. My God. Barbatos was trying to drag me outside the quarters while we were in the nude. I had no choice but to be shocked here.

“Hey, are you insane?”

“I’ll show you something good.”

“I don’t know what it is, but I can’t go outside while naked!”

“I told you to be quiet, you idiot.”

Barbatos continued to chuckle. She was a girl without a grain of sense. The heinous part about this girl was the fact that while she was senseless, her grip strength was also needlessly powerful. Where in that small physique of hers did this strength come from? When Barbatos dragged me along, I would helplessly be pulled along like a piece of straw drifting down a river. Oh Lord. This crazy bitch really did drag me outside the tent!

It was late into the night, so the encampment was quiet. Only the sparsely spread out torches held by the guards on patrol flickered in the distance. I let out a shriek.

“Save me, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy!”

“Sheesh, shut up a bit, will you? You really do disregard what other people say, don’t you?”

“Are you saying that to me? Aang? Is that something you’re saying to me right now?”

“Oh, Embers of Solace.”

Barbatos blew her breath into her palm. Barbatos then touched my face, neck, shoulder, chest, and bottom, with her right hand. The moment she did so, a warm heat spread from the areas which Barbatos had touched. The savagely cold winter night had become as warm as the evening during the early autumn. The sleet that was fluttering through the air all melted before they could reach my skin.

“Now, is that better?”

“Thanks, you have my gratitude. I’m really thankful, but a more fundamental problem, do you not think that there’s perhaps a more fundamental problem?”

“The fact that you’re ugly?”

“This fucker.....”

“Shit, I’m bringing you along to show you something good, so just follow me. It’d be fine if only your lower tool was long, but your mouth is fucking long too. Your tongue is so lengthy that you could probably make a farm on it, you limp dick bastard. Should I tear your trap out and shove it up your ass, you inept shit? The bastard who’d flap his asshole every time he opens his mouth and also make the smell of feces drift from the North Sea to the White Sea is you, you son of a bitch. Hm? Don’t make me turn that shit hole into a diarrhea hole and make you leak shitty water every time you walk, you amateur. Fucking shut your mouth and follow me.”

“.....”

Going head on against Barbatos in a battle of curses was an incredibly foolish thing to do.

Since I was an individual who had acquainted myself with proper education and beautiful refinement since the earliest days of my life, furthermore, because profanity was another world’s language, I could only helplessly be dragged away by the hands of the villainess known as Barbatos. What am I to do against Barbatos’ divine grace of profanities that contained 500 years of her labor. If it was a sin to have been born kind, then I was that sinner. I treated my crime with sympathy.

Barbatos led me to the outside of the military base. We were nearly caught by the patrols several times. While avoiding the guards, we had made twists and turns through the military camp. During that time, Barbatos would occasionally turn around and kiss me for absolutely no reason. Barbatos was a girl who kissed when she felt like kissing. I could only surrender.

Due to the snow, the outside of the encampment had become a white field. Corpses were buried in the snow field, and above those bodies, more snow fell and pushed them a layer deeper into the ground. After we had reached this spot, Barbatos let go of my hand.

“Okay. What do you plan to do here.....?”

Barbatos walked towards the snow-covered field by herself.

Towards the night sky where the snow drifted down from, Barbatos spread out her arms. She started to sing. Wondering what sort of action that was during the middle of the night, I stared at the girl.

It was a song that flowed with no lyrics but only sound.

Barbatos gazed up at the sky as if she was a saintess receiving the epiphany of God, and as she walked out towards the boundlessly vast snowy fields, she pulled the blizzard into her arms as if she was going to disappear forever.

It was difficult to distinguish the snow-covered field with Barbatos' pure white naked body.

Her song felt as if it were coming from the blizzard and not her vocal cords, and the blizzard felt as it was weeping in the distant winter sky.

—.

Winter was wailing in that spot. The cold cries of winter easily pierced through the warmth that was covering my skin. My neck became cold.

Putting more strength into her vocal cords, Barbatos' song slowly became more powerful. Barbatos opened her mouth wide and kept her eyes narrowed. She received the blizzard that came down from above with her melody, and made the wind surge back upwards. It felt as if her voice had entered a vocal range that my ears could not handle.

Ah—..... the snowy wind carried this noise. Carried by the wind, from this side of the snowy earth to the other side, to the edge of the

forest of hyun poplars, to the wolf that had poked its head out of the woods and was silently watching us, to the gaps between the wolf's teeth, to the corpses that had their faces shoved into the frozen earth, to the eyes of the bodies where the blood had froze, from there to here, and to even the areas that were further than those places and were isolated, the blizzard crawled into those locations and the melody seeped into them as well.

Thuck.

From below the snowy earth, the rotten arm of a corpse rose up. Pieces of flesh were torn from the arm revealing the bone. Even the speck of snow that was on the bone could be seen. With a 'thuck', the sound made when one stepped on snow echoed low throughout the area. Thuck, thuck, each time this sound resonated, arms surged up from the snow. As if they were trying to grab something, the frozen hands waved through the empty air. Hundreds, thousands of hands clawed at the sky.

Barbatos' song slowly came to an end. With her at the center, a countless number of dead arms had erupted from the snow. Gazing around at the skeletons, Barbatos spoke.

—All of you. Return to life.

Were they waiting for that single line?

The arm movements of the corpses stopped. In the empty space where there was nothing, the arms clenched their fists. As the corpses stood up, puffs of snow scattered as well. Once thousands of piles of snow scattered at the same time, the blizzard became more severe, and then, it slowly settled down. Once it had calmed down, there were thousands of corpses standing on the snow-covered field.

Barbatos let out a breath. Her visible white breath flowed from

between her lips. I gawked at her.

“How was it?”

Barbatos remarked.

“Despite the slight cold, it was a good idea to follow me, right?”

“.....What did you do just now?”

“Hm? Replenishing troops.”

Barbatos answered immediately.

Replenishing troops? How could this be supplementing troops!? Was this not an utterly insane girl?

I had just now witnessed the certain point in ability that I will never be able to reach no matter how much I struggle. I had also witnessed the reason behind why the social system, that was similar to that of tribes, had not collapsed within the demon world yet. Demon Lords were not only lords, but they were priests, shamans, and saints. Other demons were obedient because of that terrifying force contained within that divine name.

One day, my authority may become great enough to allow me to control the lives of others as I desire. However, I will be unable to control the things which have no lives. My political ability would suddenly become courteous when within the presence of Barbatos' own capabilities. How was I to take this? How was I to conquer this? Unsure of how I was going to accept you, I asked.

“Barbatos, who are you?”

Barbatos placed her lips on the corpses. She did not distinguish the corpses with torn flesh and the skeletons that had lost their flesh. She blessed all the corpses with a kiss. A gust of snow blew through the

field. With a corpse's head held in her hands, Barbatos turned only her head to look at me.

She grinned.

“A bitch.”

And thus, the army of skeletons advanced.

□ The Northern Guardian, Margrave of Rosenberg, Georg von Rosenberg
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 3, Day 12
Neris Plains, Imperial Army Encampment

The enemy had arrived at the end of the field which was enshrouded by a fog of snow.

It was night. Hearing that the scout had arrived to give their report, I walked outside. The blizzard and fog had mixed together making it difficult to distinguish anything in front of me. The scout was breathing heavily.

“I saw it. General, I have witnessed it. I am certain. Corpses, frozen corpses were approaching like a swarm. Aah, I saw it.....”

I brushed the snow off of the scout’s shoulder. Within the House of Rosenberg, the records of war written by our ancestors were passed down throughout the generations. The report that the scout had briefed was accurate to the characteristic which described Demon Lord Barbatos. There was nothing strange about it.

“Do not worry. I believe you.”

“You believe that, Sir Rosenberg? Do you truly believe those foolish words?”

The Crown Prince, who had quickly arrived after hearing about the urgent report, laughed in ridicule. The Crown Prince was currently wearing his sleepwear and had a fur cloak draped over his shoulders. I wonder if he had spent the entire evening drinking since his neck and his cheeks were red.

“I see that due to your age, the praise of you being a great commander is an antique now. Put yourself together, Rosenberg.

How could corpses possibly move?”

“The enemy leader is Demon Lord Barbatos. In the records of the previous holy war, there are many passages of Barbatos having used black arts to control the dead.”

“Ah, those records are probably wrong. You should think using common sense. This great one may be drunk, but I am looking at the world properly, while it seems you are sober, and yet, looking at the world in reverse. It is a problem that occurs when you have not drunk alcohol. Now then, some alcohol. Let us go and enjoy a drink together.”

“Your Highness the Crown Prince.”

“Oho? Are you saying that you won’t receive a glass from me?”

“How could this one possibly.....? I merely wish to protect the Crown Prince from the enemy demons.”

“Can a person who was unable to defend a single wall, be able to protect me?”

The Crown Prince made an invidious remark. I closed my mouth.

“I am joking. Do not be upset.”

“Your words are immeasurable, your honor.”

“Oh dear, you really do plan to not drink with me. Even though you, Sir Rosenberg, are the person who needs alcohol the most. This great one is worried. I am sincerely concerned, Sir Rosenberg. How could you possibly endure your world without alcohol?”

“This one plans to persevere through what must be endured.”

The Crown Prince took a bottle of alcohol out from his fur coat. Due to the Crown Prince being intoxicated, the bottle slipped from his hands. The bottle fell into the snow, so it did not break. Oh dear, this

precious thing..... the Crown Prince uttered and made a fuss. He blew away the snow that had stuck onto the bottle. This precious precious thing...

I tried to glare through the blizzard, but I could see nothing. Although I was unable to see anything, I ordered the captains to organize the troops. The soldiers that the Imperial Princess had left behind were all either old and frail or were individuals who were so tired and sick that they were unable to overcome the cold night. The officers and men had put their crossbows on the ground and were rubbing their palms against their legs. Ah, it's so cold that I could die..... the old soldiers whined. The sound of ah..... ah..... mixed together with the noise made by the snowy wind.

The Crown Prince asked.

“So, did Elizabeth tell you to die as well?”

“Her Highness the Imperial Princess had told this one that she would provide this one an appropriate location.”

“Oh? Is that location within the Imperial Family?”

“This one does not know.”

“Then you'll die not knowing.”

The Crown Prince spoke flatly.

“Elizabeth is a devil. I know that she is a devil. Have you ever stared into those pure red eyes of hers for a long time? I have. I could smell blood. She's a girl who makes the smell of blood flow wherever she gazes.....”

I abruptly became curious. How was the Imperial Princess' childhood? Was the Imperial Princess still the Imperial Princess when she was young? Was she like this since the beginning? I coughed. There was a wet sensation to that cough. Due to my experience, I knew that it was a bad omen when a dry cough would suddenly turn

into a wet cough.

“Your honor, did something happen in the palace?”

“.....”

The Crown Prince gulped down his alcohol without a word. Although the Crown Prince was looking towards the same direction as myself, it did not feel as if we were looking at the same location. It seemed that to the Crown Prince, the blizzard that was raging before us appeared like an illusion. The Crown Prince spoke.

“It’s my sin.”

The Crown Prince said nothing more after that.

The Crown Prince, Rudolf von Habsburg, was inferior to his little sister on all sides. The rebellion that the Crown Prince was unable to suppress for 7 months with an army of 5,000, was swept away within 15 days by the Imperial Princess’ army of 1,000. The ancient language, that the Crown Prince had become proficient with at the age of 14, was mastered by the Imperial Princess by the age of 5. As the misgovernment of His Majesty the Emperor continued, the nobles started to wish for a competent monarch. The Crown Prince was ideal.

“Do you see it?”

The Crown Prince muttered.

Unsure of what I was supposed to be seeing, I looked at the Crown Prince. He was glancing down obliquely at the blizzard which was raging at the bottom of the hill.

“Someone has come.”

The haze of dawn barely touched the lower region of the hill. A skeletal leg came out from within the blizzard. The skeleton’s feet lightly stepped on the sloping path enshrouded by haze. As it took

another step forward, the shape of a bone foot was left imprinted into the snow in the spot where the foot was previously at.

—.....

At the bottom of the slope, the skeleton looked up at us. It appeared as if it had the gaze of a wanderer who was carefully examining the mountain range which they now had to climb. Though the skeleton had no eyes, I could feel its gaze. It was a cold and transparent gaze. The Crown Prince let a laugh flow into the snowy wind.

“A lot has arrived, huh?”

From the fog mixed with snow, thousands of corpses started to pour out. Aiming for our forces' encampment, the corpses slowly ascended the hill. The sound of a horn echoed from our base. The roosters were startled by the horns and started to crow. Once the crying of the birds, which seemed as if it would never stop, had finally ceased, the blizzard raged powerfully once more and concealed the skeletons. Nothing was visible through the flurry of snow. Nothing could be seen, and yet, our troops raised their spears and crossbows.

“It's winter, I see!”

The Crown Prince bellowed loudly. He cupped his hand around his mouth to amplify the sound and shouted in a loud voice.

“It's winter! Winter is coming!”

Our soldiers feared the Crown Prince's lunacy. It felt as if the Crown Prince was not informing the soldiers that the corpses have arrived, but instead, he was calling for those corpses to approach us with haste. The Crown Prince tipsily pulled out a long sword and raised it into the air.

“All forces, charge! Chaaaaarge!”

The Crown Prince leaped over the wooden fence and started to run. All forces, follow meeee... this sound of the Crown Prince echoed widely. Do not fear death, men—... The soldiers stayed in place. Uncertain of what they were supposed to do, they glanced at one another and then turned to look at me. The Crown Prince’s figure disappeared into the snowy fog.

Shortly after.

The Crown Prince returned from the fog. He was breathing heavily. After pushing himself through the crevice in the wooden fences with difficulty, he walked to where I was. Lowering his sword down, the Crown Prince raised his shoulders conceitedly.

“Wow, not a single person came. It seems they don’t have any intention to fight.”

“.....”

“Let us just withdraw, general.”

Turning back to the captains, I ordered.

“Roll the boulders!”

The captains repeated the order. The boulders, which we had prepared beforehand, started to roll downwards. Due to the fact that the boulders were unable to roll properly, they often tumbled down towards a completely random direction, however, since there were plenty of undead in those random locations anyway, the directions they rolled could not be called entirely random. The stones collided against the skeletons and shattered their bones into pieces.

“What. Why do they listen to the general’s words but disregard the commands of a lord? These guys are really discriminating people. Once I return to the capital, I’ll punish them as rebels.”

The battle was heated since dawn.

Though our soldiers were old, they had that much experience as well. Since they had seen more surprising things during their lives, the veteran soldiers were not alarmed by the march of skeletons. Although there was a soldier who had run away, no one tried to stop them. The veteran soldiers seemed to have understood that even if one were to flee on their own out into the lonely snowy plains, they would either die from hunger, freeze to death or be eaten by beasts. The old soldiers chewed on the stale bread, which was distributed as breakfast, for a long time and swallowed it down with water.

Once all the boulders had fallen, the old soldiers drew their crossbows. Crossbows were ranged weapons that absorbed the magical energy from their surroundings and fired out bolts using that energy. The projectiles flew unnaturally if the weapon was fired too quickly, and would recoil heavily and cause the bolt to go astray if fired too late. The captains did not have to separately give instructions to fire since the veteran soldiers could shoot the crossbows while making rough assumptions of the timing in their heads. The bolts fired by the old soldiers flew quickly and firmly pierced their targets.

As they had lived according to their own discretion, they fought according to their discretion as well. The way they fought was similar to the natural physiology of the people.So the people are fighting. The ones who are fighting are the people. I deeply inhaled the cold winter air.

“Heed my words, captains!”

The captains immediately stood in a close single file line. They were aged captains. They were old soldiers who had grown old in low-grade military bases because they either had a humble status, had insignificant capabilities, or were unable to stand in a line properly. As the majority of them were people born in the north, they were also thrown away here due to the reason that they were born in the north.

Since their spines had not rusted yet, they held their backs up straight.

“Schleiermacher.”

“Yes, your honor.”

I called out each of the captain's name. A captain whose beard was still brown stood forward and raised military rites. He was the second little brother to the minor official that managed the mill which was in my territory. During my youth, back when I was sharing a childhood crush with a maiden in the village, I stood guard at the mill.

“Currently, the military strength of our central force is no more than 2,000. No matter what the cost, you must not allow the front to be breached by those corpses. Do you understand? Defend your position till your last breath.”

“As you command, margrave.”

“Hold on for as long as possible. The chances of our retreating comrades being able to survive will increase the longer we withstand. The North shall not send your death to oblivion.”

“Understood.”

The captain headed out with his servants in tow. In the distance, we could hear the faint sound of the captain shouting at his soldiers through the snow. The other remaining captains had their ears turned to that voice.

“Sir Roenbach.”

“Yes, general.”

A middle-aged man wearing silver armor walked forward. In this location, this man was the only one to have not been born in the North. Although his name was all he had left, he was once the leader of the Royal Knight Guards for the Emperor. There were 6 knights in our current forces and they had 20 valets following them. They were

the last remaining knights here.

“While leading the knights, skim over the slope and sweep away any undead that protrudes excessively. Your duty is to prevent the corpses from reaching even 50 meters from our fences. Defend the front line with your lives, and fall at the front line.”

“I shall carry out your orders, general.”

“The North shall not forget your death.”

“I, Roenbach, shall achieve glory.”

The knight leader adjusted his helmet on his head and mounted his horse. The other knights gathered around their leader. The warhorses, which belonged to a good descent, were letting out heated breaths even within this cold wind. The knights lowered their heads towards my direction once, and then they did it once more towards the Crown Prince. The Crown Prince bobbed his head. He did not utter a single word of complaint about me using the knights as I pleased. The Crown Prince merely stared at the blizzard with drunk eyes. One by one, I called each captain's name.

“Bergmann, I shall put 20 heavy infantries under your command. If there is a portion of our defenses that seems to be in danger, go there and fight.”

“Yes, your honor!”

Decades ago, during the year of famine, the young boy who had once displayed his innocence by shyly claiming that he had hunted a pheasant in worry that the young master was starving, had now turned into an old captain and responded.

“Gebauer, gather the servants and distribute projectiles to all of our soldiers. Furthermore, hand out the rest of our provisions to our officers and men. People fight with the strength provided by food.”

“I shall serve as needed, your honor.”

The girl who had enlisted in the military despite her gender, the girl who was frequently mocked by the men, and at one time, had retorted in a loud voice questioning where the males and females of the North were, was now replying to my commands here in this location after many decades had passed.

“Mighty soldiers of Habsburg, listen to my words.”

I turned towards the troops.

“I do not know who you all have sworn your loyalty to, and I do not believe that loyalty is required when your meals are on the line. However, all of you should know. The duty of a person and the task of a soldier, these are things that you all should know well. If we flee, then the youths of our country will die. If we yield, then our country’s land will be set ablaze. Oh, great soldiers of Habsburg, who were once young and have always lived in these lands, it is time for us to pass down the things which we have enjoyed to our sons and daughters.”

I unsheathed my sword and raised it to the sky. The formal dress-sword, which had been passed down for generations within my family, was lost in the previous battle. But why did that matter? I lived on the battlefield. This was my home. This was where the House of Rosenberg was at.

I cried out. The heat from my gut surged upwards, burning and piercing through my wet coughs, and exploded in the winter atmosphere.

“For the Empire!”

The soldiers raised their crossbows and spears and shouted back fervently.

— For the Empire!

While hoping for my voice to reach the other side of ranks, that could not be seen due to the fog and snow, I roared.

“For the Empire!”

The soldiers reciprocated.

— For the Empire!

The voices from the other side of the base, which was concealed by the flurry, reached where I stood as well. The aged soldiers, who were born from different places and lived their lives differently, were going to die together at the end of their lives in the same location. The snowflakes, which had all respectively formed within different temperatures and were carried by diverse winds, all fell to the same floor and subsided. To live like a snowflake and to, at last, die like a snowflake. The snow that melted first in order to prevent the snow, which was going to stack on top of them, from melting. I gladly accepted all the snow with similar lives and all the snow with similar deaths. The North was a country of snow. A home that was established for the people who were unable to go south. Turning my face towards the sky, I let out a sigh. This was a day well suited for wailing. A good day to wail.....

At forenoon, a captain came running to me.

“Your honor, the first line has been breached. The remnant soldiers of the first line have joined the second line. Fortunately, there was little confusion during the momentary retreat. Although many were injured, few were killed.”

“Good. Continue to defend as so.”

While glancing down at the map, I gave the order. The blizzard was fierce so it was impossible to perceive the military camp with one's

eyes alone. While drawing the things that could be seen and could not be seen on the map, I felt my way towards a direction and made assumptions as to where our soldiers had to go.

“We are already winning just by being able to hold out like this. Do not fight hastily, and do not die quickly. Endure for as long as you can. Instruct this to the troops once more.”

“Understood!”

After a while, an orderly ran in. The orderly was the captain’s adjutant. Since the captain had fallen in battle, the adjutant was doing the captain’s task in their stead. I did not ask where the captain had fallen, and the adjutant did not tell me as well.

“General, the second group has been breached. The second and third line have joined together and are resisting the enemy. Our morale has yet to diminish. The leader of the knight corps has fallen.”

“Very well. On your way back, inform company commander Gebauer to abandon her given task and participate on the front line. Fight while abiding your time, but move with haste. By moving quickly, you will be able to fight less.”

“Understood, general!”

Once it had become midday, around the time the blizzard had ceased, an orderly ran in. Once again, it was a completely different person. On the next occasion, the orderly had died and nearly all of the other captains had fallen, so the only ones who could run in to report were now the adjutant’s servants. The messenger gave a very punctual salute and gave the situation report.

“The third line has been breached. Our whole army is fighting back at the final wooden barricade. Although the ranks of the unit are disorderly and assimilated, there are no issues in fighting together as a group.”

“Good. I command the remaining knights to charge. If you utilize

the narrow pathway between the fences, then the charge should be easy to carry out. Strike the flanks of the enemy who are engrossed in our side.”

“Understood, your honor. May we achieve fortune in war.”

Then a different soldier, and a different soldier.....

Finally.

Everything had become still because there was no longer anyone in my surrounding.

Like a person of the North, the captains had struggled till their very last moments. We did not capture the soldiers who fled, and since we did not catch them, I believed that more had stayed. In the Royal Knight Guard, from the royal knights to the knight servants, all of them had died in battle heroically. During the final assault, the Crown Prince went forward with the troops without a word. I did not ask how the Crown Prince had died, and no one had told me how he had died either. The final messenger to give me the battle report was not a captain, not an adjutant, and was not even an adjutant's servant. The last report was given by a soldier who did not have a rank. The soldier informed me that the final line had been breached and immediately headed back out to the front.

“.....”

While receiving the serene midday sun on my back, I stared down at the map.

The sunlight melted the frozen waste, spreading a foul damp smell throughout the camp. It was the breath that had flowed from the Heavens. Since snow descended from the sky, and this was the scent that was emitted when that snow had melted, it felt as if this was the smell of the sky.Was the country of snow the country of the sky? Were the people of the snow the people of the sky? Was that the reason why the people of snow returned to the sky so easily?

My back became heated because of the sunlight. While taking in the damp scent, I recalled the time the Imperial Princess had washed my body. I was not completely ignorant in regards to the reason behind why the Imperial Princess had discarded both the Crown Prince and myself in this location.

— What should this one do?

— You will block our rear.

— Is your highness telling this one to die while defending?

— I will not stop you. However, it will not only be you. My brother shall be there as well. If you let the Crown Prince of the Empire die, then you will most likely become known as a traitor for all of eternity.

Become an eternal traitor.

The Imperial Princess was saying that.

People whispered among one another that Margrave Georg von Rosenberg was the origin to the start of this war. Margrave Rosenberg lost the Black Mountains and ruined the Empire's plan to end this battle with a short war. Furthermore, Rosenberg was now unable to protect the Crown Prince from death and will thus shake the courtroom of the Empire. Therefore, while shouldering all the crimes and tasks by himself, Georg will collapse and be submerged in the frozen waste, that is how you will contribute greatly; this was the Imperial Princess' true words. Feeling blinded by that immense Imperial grace, I asked the Imperial Princess.

— Is your highness giving this one an opportunity?

— I simply wish to give you an appropriate location. Leave while bearing all of your humiliation alone.

Although it was a devil's offer, at the same time, it was the only path to saving the Empire so it was an undeniable offer.

.....The Imperial Princess has truly given an appropriate place to this old bag of bones. As this region was my home and my country and was the place where the people will reside and reside again, her highness had seen through this.

A shadow entered from behind my back. The shadow stepped on the snow. While making an indistinct sound, the snow received the weight of the life which stepped on them.

“Hm. Are you Georg von Rosenberg?”

“That is so.”

I continued to stare at the map. Each map was a place where people had died. I thought of the people who had fought similar to the ways they had lived. I thought of their coarse and firm hands that pulled the triggers on the crossbows. Even after they had fired the bolt, they continued to pull the wire. Shoot and pull again, they continued to pull. The battle continued on as long as life persisted, and it felt as if I was nothing more than the single instant that proved that endless continuation.

“The battle is over, human child. What are you looking at?”

“The battle.”

“And if that battle is over as well, what will you look at?”

“The battle.”

The sound of metal approached and severed the winter air.

.....So this is the sound of my life being cut.

I thought as so. I wonder if the flesh diverged more delicately than the air since I could not hear the sound of it being severed. My vision was flipped and flipped several more times until I was eventually staring up towards the sky. That was the place where I will turn to. I closed my eyes.

— Since I cannot cleanse your mind, consider the thought that I am consoling you by cleansing your body. The path of consideration will at least not be solitary.

I shall contemplate the meaning and contemplate once more. However, since the country of snow was the country of the sky, one day, they will return to the earth and pile up once again, thus continuing their pitiful lives. The thing which consoled me were those poor lives and was immensely more comforting than your highness' consideration.



Your Imperial grace is immeasurable, your highness.

Please treat us subjects with sympathy.

□ The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 3, Day 12
Neris Plains, Imperial Army Encampment

“.....”

I gazed down at the head of Rosenberg which had fallen to the snow-covered ground.

Rosenberg was still looking forward with narrowed eyes. Things were most likely no longer visible in those eyes and things were most likely unable to be appreciated by those eyes anymore. Regardless, Rosenberg will forever point towards a direction with that frozen gaze. After I turned my head to follow his eyes, I saw the sky. I muttered.

“Go to a good place, margrave.”

I lifted up Rosenberg’s head from the snow. I brushed off the snow that was in his hair and wiped off the liquid which was flowing from his neck with a washcloth. Barbatos had beheaded Rosenberg.

Thus, our plan was a success. Although there was a variable where Marbas’ second army was defeated by the Imperial Princess, considering the Imperial Princess’ capabilities, if anything, that was an acceptable result. It would be better to consider it a relief that Barbatos had not lost. Additionally, it was thanks to the Imperial Princess winning that I was also able to acquire victory. A tie. It was still a tie.....

For quite a while, the war had reached a state of lull.

Marbas had to recruit troops once more and Barbatos had to reorganize her army as well. The ones that needed time was not only the Demon Lord Allied Forces but the Human Alliance, which

required time to form a new strategy, as well.

Though it seemed the humans were hoping for the war to end with a short battle, I apologize. This is still much too soon. Please partake in my waltz a little longer. While looking at Rosenberg's face, I beamed.

"What are you trying to see even after death? Close your eyes and rest well, margrave."

I lowered Rosenberg's eyelids with my palm. Thus, Rosenberg had finally closed his eyes. I did not know what great cause and what sense of justice this old man was trying to look at in his final moment. It was probably something tedious.

A captain approached and informed me that Barbatos had called for me. I ordered the captain to hold onto Rosenberg's head. I intentionally intimidated him.

"I plan to gift this to General Farnese. Hold onto it well since the general will like it very much. If you were to, perhaps, lose it, then the general would be quite upset at you. At that time, even I will be unable to stop the general."

The captain's face turned pale and he carefully bundled Rosenberg's head. The way his fingers trembled made it seem like he was handling his own head. I chuckled and made my way towards Barbatos. Within the empty enemy quarters, Barbatos was filing her nails.

"Oh, you're here?"

"I am here to congratulate you for the great victory, your highness-."

I uttered while kneeling down. I was the type of person who would even kneel if it was for a joke. Barbatos snorted.

"All right. It's quite nice to see that your bullshit is ascending. Follow me."

“Are you going to show me something good again? Your good things are lined up for each day, so I’m unsure when I’ll be able to get some proper sleep.”

Barbatos grinned.

“Can you just follow me without a word?”

If you make a fuss, then I’ll pour profanities on you by the bucketload again.

That was what Barbatos’ gentle smile was suggesting.

As an individual who believed in common sense and refinement, I followed Barbatos. A prisoner was bound in one of the corners of the military camp. His armor was quite thick. His social standing was most likely a high noble. Barbatos whispered into my ear.

“That’s the Crown Prince of the Habsburg Empire.”

“.....”

Surely.

This was something truly great.

Barbatos slightly bit my earlobe with her front teeth.

“Dantalian, you won’t swear your loyalty to me. That is a tragedy that I consider to be quite regrettable. However, although you haven’t sworn your loyalty, you are still faithful to me. I don’t plan to accept that without a price.”

“Oh? And what do you mean by that?”

“I will give him to you.”

Barbatos brushed my chest with her hand. It felt as if each of her fingers contained an organic function. So this was what the touch of a hand, that could resurrect the dead from the earth, felt like. That

was how I thought. If it was this much, then even I would have gladly stood up immediately if I were a skeleton.

“You can use that prisoner as you wish.”

“Barbatos.....”

I gently raised Barbatos’ chin. Barbatos did not refuse my discourteous touch. Our lips drew near.

“You may know this already, but I despise women with small bodies.”

“Hm, so?”

“But you alone, I cannot refuse.”

“I know, you idiot.”

We kissed for a long time. It was a kiss that contained gratitude instead of lust. Barbatos, for the reason that I had forced march northwards in order to save her, and myself, for the reason that she did not disregard my standing and presented me with a proper reward. How beautiful is a partner who knows how to be honestly grateful for what they had received, and reward the other party soon after? We were beautiful business partners. I removed my lips and whispered.

“—Although it feels like the desire to take this to the end right here and now, has piled up.”

“It’s fine. We already had our fucking fun yesterday. Go and take care of your business.”

Barbatos gestured towards the Crown Prince with her chin. I nodded my head and approached the Crown Prince of the Empire.

I wonder if the Crown Prince had rolled around on the ground a bunch since his appearance was dirtier than that of a mongrel. His

hair was silver, and yet, due to the mud, it was crudely mixed together with a brown color. With a face full of dirt, the Crown Prince looked up at me. His eyes were sunken like a drunkard who had just woken up from being intoxicated.

“Who are you.....?”

“Elizabeth’s enemy.”

“.....”

“Do you not wish to hear my proposal, oh Crown Prince?”

I grinned smoothly.

Sir older brother.

I am here to inform you of something nice.



Barbatos

Race

Demon Lord

Job

Demon Lord (SS)

Reputation

The Third Empress

Leadership

Rank S

Might

Rank A+

Intelligence

Rank A-

Politics

Rank C

Charm

Rank A

Technique

Rank C

Titles

The Immortal King,
Leader of the Plains
Faction.

Abilities

Dark Magic S+,
Tactics A,
Acting A-,
Stratagem B.

Skills

Saintess of all who
have died (S).

[Achievements: 451]

Translator's Notes

1. [↑] Cheongya Tactic [청야 전술] – A tactic where the defending army would retreat while burning every supply that could possibly be used by the enemy forces.
2. [↑] This is a fusion of two poems Hayeoga [하여가] and Dansimga [단심가]. Hayeoga was created in order to declare the death of an era. [\[Wikipedia\]](#)
3. [↑] Trot is a Korean music genre. [\[Wikipedia\]](#)
4. [↑] It's an old Korean style of music that voices the sound of drums instead of actually playing drums. [\[Wikipedia\]](#)



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[Achievements: 451]

My chastity was in peril.

Severely, at that.

This was not a joke.

I could feel the witches drooling as they stared at me.

Despite the fact that nothing in particular had occurred, the witches would invite me to their self-established red-light district while uttering, ‘Master, something big has happened. Master, something small has happened...’. If I were to go in there, then those fellows would smoke opium and viscously leer at me. They were all in the nude. Truly, they were beast-like fellows. So this was why witches lived while being mistreated. My vision felt blurred because of this crude temptation.

“Have you all gone insane?”

“Aha. Is master saying that he wants to do it with all of us at once?”

“Why is it that when I pour my words into your ears, you girls hear it through your asses?”

“Ara? Would it be better for the lord’s body to do it through our rear holes?”

“Are we truly conversing in the same language?”

“Just close your eyes once and—owie.”

I hit the top of Humbaba’s head with my knuckles.

“Listen well, you girls with scanty chests. I do not consider individuals such as yourselves as potential sex partners. If you are

flat, then you should behave as so and live modestly, and yet, you are trying to reach out for more. You are not in the position to be taken in by the world, but rather, you are in the circumstance where you must take in the world yourselves.”

“Ahahah? It is a bit troubling for us, when our master, who was obediently devoured by Miss Barbatos, brings up the flatness of breasts as a rebuttal, though?”

“.....”

These misdirected fellows. They really do just dig into another person’s weakness recklessly.

Whenever the witches went around outside, they would always wear a thick layer of clothes. Even during the late winter, where the putrid smell of water emanated from the surroundings, and the early spring, where the foul smell of water seeped into one’s intestines, the witches were unaware of the seasons due to their heavy clothes. Humbaba had told me that due to the fact that a soulless body was something to be cursed at, they should not show it to others. Every time the witches would lower their cone hats deeply on their heads, I recalled the white gloves which Lapis would always wear. The basis of the witches’ cone hats and Lapis’ gloves were the same. Birds of a feather were playing together.

Seeing how they had walked to my side of all places, it was clear that they had not gathered here on purpose. This spot was most likely the place where they had finally arrived at after being chased and chased away by other people. Although there was an inevitability in life, and the path of a person going towards a destination was beautiful, the path of a person being sent to a place of exile, due to their lives being dependent on a certain inevitability, was not marvelous. In that place of exile, I believed that I should get rid of the social status of the lowest class and allow everyone to be commoners.

Within a single night, I drew a pattern. The symbol was three white circles on a black background. While showing this to the witches, I

spoke.

“From this day forth, this shall be the symbol of Demon Lord Dantalian. Since you all are my royal guards, it is only natural for you to go around while bearing my mark on your cloaks.”

To the witches, clothes were a prison that was constantly wrapped around their bodies. As people who were ousted because they had no affiliation or home, to the witches, those clothes were their place of exile. By putting my emblem onto their cloaks, I was releasing them from their banishment. The witches understood my intention. At first, they were unable to open their mouths, until eventually, their eyes were brimming with tears.

“M-Maaaaaaster-.....”

“Shut it. If you don’t want to wear it, then don’t.”

“No matter what, we will only strip in front of our master!”

While weeping, the witches clung onto me. Sheesh. Only sighs could come out. If possible, I wanted to request for them to not strip while in front of me, but what could I do in this situation? I patted the backs of the witches.I have to live with these fellows, I see. In the end, it is my fate to live with them. This damned fate.

“Sniffle. So, when will Master take our undergarments off?”

“.....”

Wake up from your wild dreams, you pieces of gum.

Excluding the witches, the only ones allowed to bear my emblem were solely Lapis and Farnese. While having black mantles draped over each of our shoulders, we frequently crossed through the Demon Lord Allied Forces’ military camp. Having seen us from afar, the soldiers would whisper to one another.

- The King of Peasants.....
- The king's whore and slaves.....
- Why would such vulgar handmaidens.....

We considered the whispers of the soldiers as something more trivial than the cries of a morning rooster. While squealing 'kya— kya —', the witches hung on my shoulders. It seemed my shoulders were a playground to them. Even while we were walking, Farnese read a book with one hand, while furtively grabbing the edge of my clothes with the other. Ah, I shouted for these troublesome fellows to please get off of me. Lapis silently followed the us who were like that.

Suddenly, it felt as if I had come to this world and made a family.



The land, which was frozen in winter, had become undone.

The frozen waste melted in patches. The sunlight hugged the thawed earth more closely. As if trying to accept the rays more vastly, the snow-covered fields opened their gaps a little bit at a time. Glimpses of the dirt floor could be seen through the gaps. The shallowly opened ground of snow appeared like the gills of a white fish. The earth breathed heavily with the gills and took in more of the sunlight, until eventually, the snow-covered fields had melted and flowed into a brook. Although freshwater fishes, bugs, and other living beings were unable to live there since the brook water was still cold, the hurried sound of flowing water called out to other living beings. One day, a reindeer with antlers came to the brook and put its

hooves in the water. After noticing me, the reindeer hastily jumped out from the stream and ran away. Spring was in the spot by the brook where the reindeer had vanished from.

While withstanding the winter, the Demon Lord Allied Forces increased their bulk.

The rumor that we had burned the Black Mountains and took the head of the Margrave of Rosenberg surged throughout the demon continent. The people of the demon race whispered among one another, that maybe, this time, we can.... This time, the land where the winter is short, we can drive out the humans and regain our homes..... The demons took up their spears. Hired soldiers gathered. Volunteer soldiers were formed. Several Demon Lords, who were once skeptical about war, raised their heavy bottoms. During the spring where beings came to life, the demons prepared for war in order to take the lives of the enemy. This year's spring will be a brutal season.

Throughout the winter, the humans moved busily. Once it had become certain that the short-term battle would develop into a prolonged war, every kingdom ruled over by the humans put down a draft order. The youngsters, who were preparing for the first tilling of the year back in their farm villages, were gathered onto the battlefield. Occasionally, whenever the rumors about the human armies would reach us, they were all rumors about the Demon Lords, who lived near the human territory, suffering a disastrous tragedy.

— His Highness, Rank 49th Crocell, had lost his Demon Lord Castle and is seeking asylum in Niflheim.....

— They say that Rank 70th, Demon Lord Seere, died in battle.

— Those rotten human assholes.

The sound of voices was rampant. While the Demon Lord Allied

Forces were catching their breath, and the Human Alliance was developing its breath, the Allied Forces and the Alliance hastily delivered their voices to one another through envoys.

A certain human king had sent a report which claimed that since the demons were the first to cross over the Black Mountains and invade the other's race, this was considered an invasion.

Since the one to have plundered and destroyed Dantalian's Demon Lord Castle first was the Margrave of Rosenberg, and since Rosenberg is a human, you humans are the ones to have invaded. We are not the invaders, we are the victims, was the report that the Demon Lords sent back.

In the first place, you demons are the ones to have spread the Black Death throughout the world, and since Rosenberg had plundered that castle with the mere intention to cure his people of that disease, ah, if we are to distinguish the order of affairs, then are you demons, not the ones that deserve to die? The human king sent a slightly more harsh report.

For people who have no proof that we had first spread the plague, and yet, are insisting on it so fervently, I understand that you humans have dumb fucking heads on your shoulders, was the response that Barbatos had written. However, the other Demon Lords adamantly prevented her from sending that message, and instead, interpreted her words in a more mild style of writing.

Once they had begun to quibble over who had done wrong first, a countless number of unverifiable criticisms started to pour out without end. The letters did not have any actual evidence, but instead, provided support through fancy rhetorics. Throughout the winter, although the Demon Lord Allied Forces and the Human Alliance quarreled over who was the initiator, in truth, everyone was already well aware of the fact that, at this point, who was first did not matter at all. Despite the fact that everyone had already perceived this, no one showed any signs of knowing. According to the words conveyed by the envoys, the humans became the victims and the demons

became the victims, making the universe full of only injured parties. Therefore, everyone most likely understood that in a world where the heaven and earth had become victims, that that world could not truly be a world which belonged to the people who were wronged. It was a self-evident truth. If one were to go out of their way to speak this self-evident truth out of their mouth, then people would touch, fumble, and rub that obviousness, coating it with the dead skin of their hands, until eventually, the self-evident truth becomes a crude truth covered in dirt, thus the lords did not utter these words. The first to speak would be the first to lose.

And no one desires to lose.

Nobody.



I hired more mercenaries and increased the mass of my army to 7,000 men.

Having heard the rumor that ‘His Highness Dantalian gives good wages’, mercenary captains came looking for me on their own two feet. The captains watched my countenance when before me.

“The word that a massive war is going to occur soon, is growing thick.....”

“The rumors are correct. Will you all follow me to the front as well?”

“If anything, if us humble ones were to go to the front line, then would your honor not appear sordid.....?”

“This is not a war that follows a great cause, it is a battle where we

strike while making use of the enemy's destitution. How could it be more sordid than this?"

"Would defeating the humans not thus be a great cause?"

"Even if that was a great cause, would that be your cause? Even if we were to get rid of the human empire and establish a millennium, would that place be your kingdom?"

"Your words are immeasurable, your honor. Please be discerning."

"Pay is provided every 10 days within my army. Infantrymen will receive 1 gold, and cavalrymen will receive 3 gold. As for food, it would be fine to leave half of your salary with me and solve it with that, or you can buy from the peddlers that follow behind our unit. As we do not provide arms separately, manage those yourselves. Since it operates as so, understand it as so. Do not worry about a great cause, and only consider the personal profit that you can gain. I shall be the person to be concerned with the great cause."

The captains nodded. They had eyes that showed that they understood my words.

"Please tell us humble ones the military regulations which we must follow."

"Do not discriminate one's race or birthplace and only follow rank."

The captains stood up and bowed their heads to the ground.

"We have received your honor's orders."

During the late winter, Farnese trained the newly enlisted hired soldiers once more. Since there was already a numerous number of soldiers who were loyal to Farnese, it was not as difficult as it was previously in order to train the new recruits. 2 soldiers who had beaten a prostitute to death, 1 soldier who had threatened a merchant, and 4 soldiers who had practiced usury, these soldiers were all caught and forced to disembowel themselves. Farnese had

personally pulled out their internal organs and boiled some blood soup. Farnese spoke after spitting out a chunk of an intestine.

“Even the insides of these fools are rotten so the taste of the meat is spoiled. Truly, they were people that one should not be associated with. Behead them and feed them to the hounds.”

Even as winter passed and spring approached, to the soldiers, Farnese would always remain in their minds as winter, so whenever they saw the general's face, their shoulders trembled. Although the ground that was frozen throughout the winter had thawed, the discipline within the military remained as cold as a blade.

The soldiers did not get excited by the spring sun, and instead, trained vigorously. While giving shouts, the soldiers adjusted their ranks and held out their spears. The soldiers' sweat fell down onto the ground where the snow had melted.

Once the fourth month had arrived, the Demon Lord Allied Forces moved south, the Human Alliance marched north, and as if they had arranged to do so beforehand, both armies set up their encampment on the opposite ends of a plain that was located in the center of the human and demon territories.

□ The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 2
Polles, Bruno Plains

The Demon Lord Allied Forces and the Human Alliance sent and received ultimatums. It was decided that by sending an emissary from both armies, the two were to discuss whether the two armies will truly go to war, or if we will go into peace talks. Of course, the chance of a truce happening was nearly non-existent.

The number of lives that were lost had already reached the thousands. Like how thunder would resonate when lightning struck, at this point, going to war was a natural flow of occurrence. Even all of the Demon Lords—excluding Paimon—were preparing for this war. There was a single problem.

Who would be picked as the envoy.

“Why not just pick Dantalian?”

Barbatos stood forward here.

“He has the most amount of contributions in this war, doesn’t he? His talking ability isn’t bad either, and since he has the lowest rank, he’d be perfect to use as an errand boy. We’re sending an envoy nominally, aren’t we? So there’s no need for us to lose face by sending a high ranking person, right? Use him as a gofer.”

Truthfully, that was a keen insight.

In the exact center of the two armies, a single white tent was set up. That was the location where the envoys would meet and share a discussion. Since a lot of brooks flowed through the plains, the sound of heated stray dogs could be heard mating near the water. There was no pedigree among stray dogs so a black male dog was tangled

together with a white female dog. I stopped on my way to the tent to observe the mating of dogs for a while.

“Those fellows seem to be better than me at that.....”

I muttered to myself. According to a long-standing decorum, emissaries with the task of declaring war were not allowed to have escorts or attendants with them.

Once I turned around and gazed at the place far behind me, I could see thousands of flags flapping in the wind. That place appeared like an island composed of demons. Looking at the opposite side, thousands of flags were waving there as well, and ten thousands of humans were gathered in a line, making them appear as grand as an island. Since it felt as if I had exclusive possession of the ocean between the two islands, it felt excessively generous.

There was barely anything inside the tent. Two wooden chairs that were painted white, and a single table which was, of course, also painted white. Only those three objects were placed here by themselves. I sat in one of the chairs and silently waited for the humans' emissary.

Like the spring breeze, the envoy of the humans entered the tent.

“.....”

“.....”

Our eyes met. I moved my head and nodded first. The girl also returned a light nod. The silver haired girl sat on the chair at the opposite side of the table. In a single glance, I knew that she was Elizabeth Atanaxia Evatriae von Habsburg, the Imperial Princess.

The Imperial Princess carried in a parcel. The thing which she brought out from the package was something that I was not expecting at all. It was a Go board. In this world, it was a game board that was sometimes referred to as the Black and White Flags. After taking out a Go board and a container filled with stone pieces, the

Imperial Princess set them down on top of the table.

“.....”

I gazed blankly at the Imperial Princess.

The Imperial Princess grabbed a handful of the white stones and then nodded her head towards me. She wanted to determine who was going to go first and who was going to go after.

—Would you look at this?

I laughed inside of my head. The intention behind this humorous gesture was evident. The Imperial Princess was trying to test my intelligence right now. If I display an ability that is lower than her expectation, then the Imperial Princess will most likely disregard my existence and not consider someone like myself as an individual to negotiate with. Even if I were to browbeat by shouting ‘What foolish action is this?’, I would gain the same result.

How enjoyable.

How very enjoyable.

I picked up a single black stone and placed it on top of the Go board. It represented an odd number. The Imperial Princess showed the number of stones that were in her hand. 3. Indeed, it was an odd number. Since I had guessed correctly on whether the number of stones she had in her hand was even or odd, I gained the initiative. The fact that the black stones had the first move while the white stones moved after, was the same in this world as well. However, there was no komi^[1] here. Whoever takes the black stones and gains the initiative will have an absolute advantage.

And thus.

I was a person who had rarely ever lost after grabbing hold of the black stones.

— *Tack*.

I put down my first move.

The black stone that I put down made a light sound.

Seeing as the surface of this Go board was smooth, it was evident that this was a board that the Imperial Princess enjoyed using. It was most likely made using quite the luxurious wood. The sound was satisfying.

“.....”

The Imperial Princess silently gazed down at the Go board.

My first placement was at the top left corner of the board.

By putting one's first move at the top left corner of the board, that was similar to the act of brazenly giving the middle finger to the opponent. In the game of Go, where there is an emphasis placed on etiquette, this was a move that was severely difficult to tolerate. It would be fine to call this my declaration of war. While moving the stones around in her hand, the Imperial Princess made her move.

— *Tuck*.

This time, it was my turn to become quiet.

The location where the Imperial Princess had set down her stone was at the exact center of the Go board, in other words, a cheonwon^[2].

If I were to decipher the meaning, then it would be fine to say that in response to my middle finger, the Imperial Princess had given me two middle fingers.

“.....”

My head became cold. Although it may have been a different matter if a black stone were to be placed down as a cheonwon. A cheonwon with a white stone? Even if a pro were to play against a 7-year-old child, they would never put down a move as ignorant as this. Even from my own father, I have never been as disrespected as this.

Alright.

This will become a dog fight.

The first move was on the top left, and the second move was a cheonwon. Was this bliss not wonderful? Something like courtesy and contemplation on the Go board should be shoved in the grub of a female hog.

— *Tack*.

This time, I purposely put down my stone quietly on the third turn. My head becoming colder as my anger rose, was my primary habit. The Imperial Princess must have been the same as well, as the stone she put down on the fourth turn was quiet and the location which she placed it down at was logical. The childish confrontation was over. In an instant, we were immersed in the battlefield on the board.

— *Tack*.

— *Tuck*.

The war started at the top right of the board and slowly spread to the center. I mainly went on the offense, while the Imperial Princess primarily stayed on the defense. While I attacked in order to pierce through the center, the Imperial Princess built a stronghold in the middle and defended in order to secure the territory around her. I, who was trying to start a fight, did not back down, and the Imperial Princess, who was receiving that battle, did not step down. A slugfest occurred naturally.

While I pressed on the fight at the top left of the board, at odd times, I would attack in waves from different directions. Each time I did so, the Imperial Princess calmly faced my assault. Occasionally, when I relied on modern Go techniques to make my moves, the Imperial Princess tilted her head.

“.....”

Eventually, after every 10 to 20 turns, her hand would stop and go to her chin. Every time this happened, the Imperial Princess would stare down at the board for a frighteningly long amount of time. Since there was no regulation on time, the Imperial Princess could think for as long as she wanted.

Finally, after 30 to 50 minutes had flown by, the Imperial Princess would counter my move. Although I was unsure whether that was the past style of Go or not, I was at least certain that that move was not a modern Go tactic. Despite that, as it was in accordance with reason, it contained an abstruse principle.

The Imperial Princess revived the stone that I had killed, enclosed the stone that I was fixated on, and utilized the stone that I had thrown away. I stole the stone which the Imperial Princess tried to protect, invaded the territory which the Imperial Princess had surrounded as her foothold, and pillaged the rear which the Imperial Princess had made. We did not yield even the slightest bit. Nothing was conceded and no compromise was made.

Occasionally, when the Imperial Princess set down her white stone, she would voicelessly ask me about her move.

— If it is this much, then is this not enough to withdraw?

At those times, I would put down a black stone next to another with no emotion on my face. Every time the opposition would make a subtle request to create a distance, I immediately rushed in. Even if I were to receive a loss for such actions.

Though this may have also been a matter of winning or losing, it was, at the same time, a type of conversation. I desired to respond to her.

— Push off.

Indeed, the Imperial Princess responded with a face void of emotions as well. She repeated the same suggestion twice and I did not encourage it. The next turn, and the next turn, as the battle continued, the Imperial Princess and I sounded out each other's meaning.

— Well, your side will be the one at a disadvantage then.....

— That is what you think. I want this spot.

— Normal people are unable to gain every location that they desire. Give it up.

— That is usually how an incompetent person consoles someone.

- I regret to tell you, but I am not an incompetent person.
- And I as well, am not a normal person. I apologize.

The second half.

My hand stopped in mid-air with a stone in my grasp.

“.....”

Until now, I had gained subtle pleasures by utilizing the results of modern Go. However, the Imperial Princess had created new countermeasures on the spot and countered my moves. At some point, I had started to slowly lose the paths which I could go. A battle that was never before seen in a Go manual was unfolding on the board before me.

Without a doubt, I had taken profit during the early-mid portion of the battle. I had fought and won. Despite that, once we had arrived at the middle point of the match, the Imperial Princess had dragged the game down to a fog. That depth was not her experience, but instead, it was purely her head, her creativity, and over all else, it was her intuition that dragged the match down to the quagmire at the bottom. The Imperial Princess, who did not know who Go Seigen^[3] was, had no clue who Bamboo Grove was, and was unknowledgeable of Lee Chang-Ho, was able to drop me into a pit.

After the middle point of the match, I often fell into thought. My breathing became more unmanageable as the mire rose. In order to handle that unwieldy breathing, I held my breath for a long time and exhaled deeply. I had to invest more than double, triple the amount of time than the Imperial Princess had needed in order to make my next move.

- What's the matter?

Without even a second of hesitation, the Imperial Princess put down her next move the instant I put down my stone. She was pressuring me with vigor. She provoked and ridiculed me.

— It seems your spirit has abruptly died down. Where have all your attacks, that you had so self-assertively carried out early on, disappeared to? Have you run out of stratagems? Have you reached the bottom of your clever schemes? How disappointing. You are a genius with only a brilliant wit. There are a countless number of geniuses like that throughout history.

—

I did not respond to the provocations.

I stooped and stooped again.

Even if the Imperial Princess made her move within a second, even if she deliberately interfered with my territory, I did not concern myself with any of that and only considered the image of the board. There was no restriction on time anyway. It was my creed to make use of a condition that could be used.

— How insipid.

—

— Try giving a more amusing response. Is this game not becoming enjoyable for the both of us after such a long time? Come, oh Demon Lord. Your spirit and my spirit, let us determine which side among the two is stronger. Would that, too, not also be considered the fun of

Go?

—

— Look here.

I curled up. I merely curled up.

It was fine to curse at me and tell me that I was boring. Laugh at me all you want.

There are no boatmen who would go against raging waves. A boatman would align the shaking of the waves with the trembling of the bow and avoid the immediate threat. The reason was simple. Boatmen crossed the ocean in order to arrive at land, they were not going out to sea in order to fight against the ocean. In the end, a person with a destination, a person who was given a direction in life, would not be flipped over when confronted by provocations. They merely flowed.

Eventually.

—

—

Words had disappeared from both the Imperial Princess and myself.

Incitement, ridicule, and even confrontation no longer went back and forth between us. I endured the time while stooped down, and the Imperial Princess withstood the time while curled up. We had both arrived at a distressful time. There was no ingenuity or intuition there. There was no experience or logic. Since only the surplus of

time, which we had to endure till the very end, remained, we were both pulled there. That was not the time that flowed, but the time that grabbed hold and pulled.

Why we had to keep placing down stones.

There was only a single reason.

Merely to win.

Once the fight on the board, that was once a competition for victory and also a type of conversation, had reached its final moment, only the match to determine the winner remained. We had lost the meaning behind all the silent conversations we had shared up till now. No, we were unable to even remember it properly now. Only the Go board placed in front of us existed in our sight.

That was the end.

It was an end game with no glory or disturbance.

It was a concluding move that moved according to the end sequence that was determined.

— *Tack.*

— *Tuck.*

— *Tack.*

“ ”

The Imperial Princess stopped her hand.

The 252nd turn.

Her slender fingers, which were holding onto white stones, drifted in mid-air. As if the time somewhere on her fingers were caught in a net, it remained in place. A long time flowed by. The Imperial Princess nodded her head, and then, moved her hand towards the Go pieces container.

Clack clack clack.

The Imperial Princess dropped three to four stones on top of the board at once.

Bulgye(不計)[\[4\]](#)

It was a declaration that represented one's surrender.

“.....”

I picked up two black stones and placed it on top of the board.

“.....”

Once I did so, the Imperial Princess took two white stones and placed it down. I had asked her a question. If I had won by 2 points. The Imperial Princess then confirmed that I did indeed win by a 2 point difference. I carefully nodded my head. So I won by 2 points, huh?

After putting away all of the stones, we reenacted the war from the very beginning. We were reviewing the moves we had made. Although it was obvious, the Imperial Princess and I clearly remembered every single move we had made from start to finish. There was no hindrance in reenacting everything.

“Why did you put it down like this here?” [Elizabeth]

“Since you kept clinging to me, I twisted it around in order to confuse you.” [Dantalian]

“Aah, so you really were trying to do that. I was dubious since it

was such a random move. I panicked a bit because I assumed you were perhaps aiming for a sharp resolve.” [Elizabeth]

“How about you? Why did you spread out your pieces here like this? From what I can see, would conquering the bottom right not be the wiser decision.....?” [Dantalian]

“Is it not too obvious? If I were to place a stone down there, then the shape would have flowed like this.....” [Elizabeth]

“Aah. You were worried that all of your pieces at the bottom would disappear.” [Dantalian]

“That is so. If possible, I wanted to leave that spot alone.” [Elizabeth]

“Wait. If I were to play a piece here, then what would have happened?” [Dantalian]

“Mm. Would that not be a move with a bad pulse?” [Elizabeth]

“A bad pulse? Wait a moment. If I cut it here then.....” [Dantalian]

“I told you it really is a bad move. Look carefully, the stone that has difficulty surviving in the middle.....” [Elizabeth]

At around the time our review had ended.

I looked up towards the sky by chance and noticed that it was pitch black. It was bizarre. It was something where we could not tell when the sun had set. Once I had perceived our surroundings, I realized that we were looking down at the Go board while solely relying on the moonlight. I drew my brows together and gazed at the Imperial Princess. As expected, the Imperial Princess was neatly knitting her brows. The other party was a stranger, and yet, they also felt familiar. It felt as if we had died and come to life again.

“.....”

“.....”

We both stood from our chairs. Just like we did when we had first arrived, we left without sharing a single word as well. The very fact that we had discussed so many things while reviewing was questionable.

There was an uproar the moment I returned to the Demon Lord Allied Forces' encampment. They were curious as to what sort of negotiation, that required me to be stuck in the tent from dawn to dusk, had taken place. I could not give any sort of response to the Demon Lords who were asking whether the war was determined, or if a truce agreement was achieved. Barbatos, with a face that looked like she was staring at the world's weirdest person, asked me.

“What happened? What kind of talk did you share over there?”

“.....No, nothing was settled yet. I'll tell you once things are decided.”

“When will it be determined then? Tomorrow?”

I tilted my head.

“Probably the day after tomorrow? Around then.”

“I mean, it's good that you're earnestly carrying out the meetings, but why do you need to negotiate for three days in a row in a situation where there's no other option but war?”

“I'm not sure yet, so don't ask.”

The Demon Lords appeared pent-up. Regardless, since I truly did not know, I was unable to give a proper response. In conclusion, it was officially decided that the negotiation will continue tomorrow and the day after.

I avoided the questions from the other Demon Lords and returned to my quarters. As usual, Lapis was educating Farnese in our

quarters. Farnese was learning how to speak while reading out loud the lines written on a piece of paper. She had a good head on her shoulders so she was able to memorize the lines themselves with ease, but her tone while giving a speech and other things related to that were not perfect yet. Well, everything was most likely not perfect in the eyes of Lapis. I made them stop their practice for a moment and spoke.

“Farnese, do you perhaps know how to play Black and White Flags?”

“Do you mean Go? Though this young lady may have read a lot of records of Go matches, this young lady has never played it herself. Most of the time, this young lady just enjoyed reading the records by herself.”

“Mm. And you, Lapis?”

“This one does not have any experience as well. Is something the matter?”

“No, it’s nothing. You can continue practicing.”

I sat in the corner of the room and continuously stared up at the empty space. The match that I had played until earlier kept drifting around in my head. It was not something that was driven by the mere shape of stones. On that board, a certain atmosphere, or something similar to mood, clearly took shape there. However, no matter how much I tried to recall that form, nothing could be precisely grasped.

Once in awhile, I could hear the sound of Lapis scolding Farnese. I closed my eyes and looked back at the air of the Go board. However, the only thing that appeared in my mind were the slender fingers of the Imperial Princess Elizabeth. Although it somehow felt as if there was a key point there, it was difficult to believe that there was that kind of secret hidden point behind those fingers.Really, there are quite the strange occasions in the world. I muttered to myself.

Tomorrow, the Imperial Princess will most likely gain the initiative while I go second.

I will probably lose.

That was the last thought that crossed my mind before I fell asleep.

□ The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 2
Polles, Bruno Plains

As soon as the first rooster cried out at dawn, I walked out to the plains.

At the tent, the Imperial Princess had already arrived and was seated on the chair.

“.....”

We greeted each other lightly this time as well, however, different to the first day where it had ended after giving each other slight nods, we both lowered our heads properly this time. We did not do so with the particular intention of showing the other party respect. It was just that courtesy naturally came out on its own. Once I raised my head, even the Imperial Princess was furrowing her brow as if something was strange.

“.....”

Abruptly, the Imperial Princess stood up and grabbed my wrist. She turned my hand back and forth and examined it, but the more she looked at it, the more her brow were furrowed. I did not stop the Imperial Princess, since due to her eccentricity, I was also able to carefully observe the Imperial Princess' fingers.

The Imperial Princess' hand was rough. My mind remained smooth because of that roughness. I understood the fact that the roughness of a hand and the smoothness of a mind were proportional to one another. It was a surprising truth. Even though I was already formerly aware of this truth, it felt as if I had just now first learned of it.

While our right hands were being grabbed at and were grabbing the other

, we gazed at each other.

“.....”

“.....”

Indeed, there was something peculiar. Although I did not know what was weird, something was weird anyway.

Similar to yesterday, a Go board was set on top of the table. I obviously took the white stones while the Imperial Princess naturally took the black.

The result was my defeat.

On the 232nd turn, I admitted my Bulgye defeat. No matter how much I calculated it, I was at a disadvantage by 1 point. I muttered bluntly.

“Is it a 1 point difference?”

“It is a 1 point difference, I see.”

“Hm.”

“Do you want to review?”

“Although I am eager to do so.....”

I looked up towards the sky. We had clearly started the match at dawn, but somewhere along the line, the sky was glowing with the setting sun. More time was consumed in today's match compared to yesterday. Be it the Imperial Princess or myself, we did not tease or ridicule one another even once, and instead, handled our stones earnestly from start to finish. It was a state of affairs where excellent skill was sought out in a fair match. Furthermore, since the Imperial Princess' ethos was antique to me, I was unfamiliar with it, and since

my ethos was uncanny to the Imperial Princess, it was foreign to her. Since my fair move became a trick to her, and her excellent skill became a bad move to me, it became increasingly difficult. Thus, it was inevitable that a lot of time was consumed.

“.....At this rate, it seems negotiations will be fruitless today as well. It is troubling since the other Demon Lords will grill me about what I had possibly done that would require this much time.”

“It is the same on this side as well. Though I had come out at dawn with the intention to leisurely go into negotiations after having finished a match of Black and White Flag, I did not expect that it would take this much time.....”

“Ah, I apologize. I must have come out a bit late.”

“No, there is no reason to apologize. I arrived only moments before you had, after all. The amount of time I had waited most likely does not even reach 20 minutes.”

“Hm.”

“Mm.....”

We looked back and forth between the Go board and the other person's face. We did not express it vocally, but we were sharing the same thought. It felt like it would be proper etiquette to be the first person to speak since I was the one to be defeated today. I opened my mouth.

“Imperial Princess, you do not have any intention to go into a truce, is that not so?”

“Ah, I have none. Whatsoever.”

An immediate response.

We both nodded our heads at the same time.

“Then I guess the agreement is over.”

“Good. The treaty is over.”

With that, the negotiations had come to an end.

There was not even an inch of dissatisfaction from either the Imperial Princess or myself. A truce negotiation that had ended within 5 seconds after it had started, would this, perhaps, not be the very first time in history that this had ever occurred? Whatever it was, it did not matter. There was something more important to us right now.

“Let’s review the match.”

“Let’s.”

We revised the match until just before midnight. Part-way through, a small mock-game would unfold whenever the question ‘what would have happened if I had placed it like this here?’, would arise. We tried to figure out how to continue the groundwork of our curiosity in order to keep up the effects of a cheonwon until the mid-portion of the game. Sadly, far from the answer, a method that reached the vicinity of a solution did not appear.

Today as well, the Demon Lords waited for me with wakeful eyes. To the questions about what had happened during today’s negotiation, I responded.

“4 hours from now, the human emissary and I have arranged to meet once again at early dawn. Before the day ends tomorrow, without fail, I plan to determine whether we will break down the negotiation or come to an agreement.”

Despite the fact that I had carried out the negotiations since dawn

today, the other Demon Lords were surprised by my statement that I was going to continue the rest of the conference at 4am tomorrow. Among them, a few of the Demon Lords had even complimented me because I was behaving in a truly rare to be seen earnest and sincere fashion.

Of course, the negotiation was already over. We both did not have even the slightest intention to end the war. There was a need for us to carry out our final game simply because our current match record was in a state of a 1:1 draw. No matter what happens, this was a match that must absolutely take place.

Afraid that I may possibly be defeated due to a lack of sleep, I went to sleep the moment I entered my quarters. Although Farnese had latched onto me and requested for me to please do something about Lapis, I ignored it. Handle your education yourself.

This lord has the most important match of his life placed before him right now, child. Do not disturb him.

□ The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 3
Polles, Bruno Plains

I dozed off for a 3-hour nap. Since I had no reason to wait an hour, I walked out to the plain. On this day, it has been 1 year since I had fallen into this world.

The plains were drenched in the foul smell of water. Whether the morning dew was trying to make prior preparation to form, or if a bout of a sudden shower was making a declaration of war, the drowsiness of my eyelids gently spread the air that was drenched in moisture. That transmission felt pleasurable. 10 minutes after I had entered the tent, the Imperial Princess arrived.

“.....”

“.....”

We greeted one another. We lowered our heads more than we did yesterday.

The final match had begun. I took the initiative with the black stones while the Imperial Princess played second with the white stones. Continuing from yesterday and the day before that, the most magnificent match unfolded today.

Like the first match, we provoked each other without hesitation. However, we did not mock one another. Even if she rushed in immediately, my arrangement was not at risk since my base still remained there. In the locations that were dangerous, the black and white stones were evenly mingled together because there was a risk towards me. Although the fight of turns was intense enough to make my head feel dull, since there was no countdown, I was able to regain my composure through my mind.Aha, a fight without time

restraints was this splendid, was it? A critical beauty can be contemplated as just beauty, I see.

A drizzle fell during dawn.

Rain fell to the ground while containing the scent of the clouds. People say that if a person wished to be fragrant, then they must be broken down many times. The raindrops made sure to break apart and emanate a scent. While being drenched by the sound of the rain being broken apart and the foul fragrance emanating from the rain water, we continued our game of Go. Since our clothes were more burdensome than the rain, we took off a couple of layers. Like how my body was already dripping wet with water, I was now being drenched more comfortably.

Many raindrops fell on top of the Go board as well. The rain that fell on the black stones splattered, while the rain that fell on the white stones smoothly flowed down the line of the stone. Water pooled on top of the board. Be it the black stones or the white stones, their bodies were at least half engulfed in the water. Rather than us having placed them there ourselves, it appeared as if they were there by chance, making their placement closer to a coincidence than a necessity. At times, I placed down my stones without any thought, making it feel as if the rain was thinking in my stead, and the stones were fathoming everything in my place. If one were to look at it again, then that was an excellent move that contained prudence. However, if someone were to ask if I had put down an excellent move because I wanted to, then I could only tilt my head. To me, that felt like a fair move.

The streak of rain fell onto the plain as well. As the rain roughly struck the ground all around us, it made our surroundings tranquil. In order to prevent other miscellaneous things from approaching us, the sound of rain pounded down those miscellaneous sounds. Though I was drenched, I believed that the rain curved away from us and fell at the edge of the plains. I did not feel as if the demon army and the human army, which resided on this and that side of the plains, were islands, but instead, believed that this spot we were currently in was

the island. The game board was another island within that island. Therefore, the two of us who were surrounding that island were tranquil like the ocean.



Before I knew it, I was not fighting in order to win, but I was fighting in order to not make a mistake.

This day must not be stained by an error. Albeit it would be a different case if I were to make a mistake where I was unable to realize the opponent's well-thought out play, I absolutely could not forgive a mistake that occurred due to being lazy and insincere. That would be a shameful and sorry thing to do.

Since I had a lot of time to think and fathom, my stone placement speed was slow. The Imperial Princess was like that as well. We were lethargic. The slow bodies were wet by rain so they were profound. The instant the rain had stopped falling from the sky, we held our breaths for a moment. The water had cleared from the board. The match was decided.

“.....”

“.....”

313 turns.

Bulgye.

1 point difference.

Black's victory.

The Imperial Princess Elizabeth muttered.

“.....It seems I have basked in all the beauty I could bask in during my lifetime.”

“Indeed.”

“Demon Lord, could you die here together with me?”

I slowly nodded my head.

“I am fine with that, but is there a need to die right this instant?”

“What point is there to live any longer when the light will fade after today? If it is now, then I can lightly depart.”

“I promise you that the number of occurrences more pleasant than this will increase from now on.”

“.....”

Elizabeth placed her hand on her chin and went into deep thought.

“I understand. I shall believe in your words, Demon Lord, and live longer. Even if having hope and having that hope then betrayed is what is referred to as life, I do hope that at least you will not betray my expectations, Demon Lord.”

“I will do my best.Ah, let us not review today’s Go match.”

“Mm. I too wish to just leave it like this.”

I lowered my head deeply.

“I am Dantalian. I am in your care.”

“I am Elizabeth. I will also be in your care.”

The Imperial Princess bowed her head as well.

We had introduced ourselves on the third day after having first met one another.

I spoke.

“Imperial Princess, in the hometown where I had once resided, 6 to 7 points are deducted from the black stones that go first. If this were my hometown, then this would be your win.”

“How could one judge these matches with a foreign rule? Please withdraw your words. I wish to accept a lost as a lost.”

“How could I throw away my home and fool my mind when my heart constantly remains at home despite my body being here? To me, this is the same as having lost to you, Imperial Princess. This is not something that can be convinced otherwise.”

“Then we have both lost.”

“We have both won.”

We nodded our heads. For a long time, we stared at the board that had rainwater pooled on top of it. Although the rain that must fall had all fallen, there was still time left for it to flow. Several raindrops formed a streamlet and gently flowed. I spoke.

“It should be fine to hold a conversation now. Please consider this as a secret meeting held between the two of us, Imperial Princess. If by any chance, would it be fine to confirm whether you possess a tool similar to that of a Memory Play artifact? If that is not a discourtesy, that is.....”

“Ah, of course.”

The Imperial Princess stood up and took off a single layer of clothing at a time. I received her clothes and felt her inner and outer pockets. There was nothing. There were raindrops that had formed on the Imperial Princess’ pure white naked body. I returned all of her clothes.

“Thank you.”

“Would it be fine if I could check as well.....?”

“Naturally.”

I took off all of my clothes and pushed it towards the Imperial Princess. As I had done, the Imperial Princess searched even the corners of my clothes as well. She nodded and returned my clothes.

“Excuse me for the inconvenience.”

“Nonsense.”

We put back on our soaking clothes. While sitting face to face on our chairs, we were finally able to get to the main point. The first person to open their mouth was the Imperial Princess.

“It was your mistake for having spared the Margrave of Rosenberg and sending him to me, Demon Lord. Although it seems like you were hoping for Rosenberg and myself to have an internal strife over military power, the margrave is too old to pull that off.”

“I also consider that as something regrettable.”

It was true. I thought that the Margrave of Rosenberg would resist against the Imperial Princess a little bit more. I did not expect that he would obediently become a meatshield and die on the battlefield. In the original timeline, he was an individual who had put the Empire in turmoil because he had nearly started a revolt against the Imperial Princess.

“How did you cajole the margrave into doing it?”

“He meekly obeyed after I put my body against his a single time. He was a silly old man.”

I chuckled. She was a girl who knew how to enjoy a joke.

“I see the Imperial Princess is good with jokes.”

“Is that so?That is a compliment that I am hearing for the first time since I was born.”

The Imperial Princess made a thin smile. It was a smile that befitted her. I rested my body comfortably on my chair and spoke.

“You criticized me that I had made a mistake, but Princess, that is the same for you as well. It seems you had sent the Crown Prince along with the margrave. How unfortunate. If he had died during the dog fight, then you would have become the sole successor to the

throne. Though you would have probably put the responsibility of the Crown Prince's death on the margrave.....”

The Imperial Princess let out a sigh.

“Was my brother captured?”

“We caught him alive. The Crown Prince is currently my prisoner.”

“.....Never in his life has that blood relative of mine been helpful to me. I had tried to poison and assassinate him before, but he is strangely quick-witted so he was able to survive to this day. At the very least, I gave him the opportunity to die honorably, and yet, to be caught as a prisoner there.....”

“I have shared private conversations with the Crown Prince often. Thanks to that, I have come to know about most of your past. It is quite inspirational.”

I smoothly raised the corners of my mouth.

“Apparently, you had murdered two of your sisters and two of your brothers.”

“.....”

The Imperial Princess' sighs became deeper.

“.....I see my brother truly has told you everything. Oh Demon Lord, did my brother tell you the whole truth behind the reason why I had killed my own flesh and blood?”

“Yes.”

By coaxing the Crown Prince, I had raked in everything that could possibly work as a weakness against Elizabeth. The family history that the Crown Prince and Imperial Princess was involved with was rather ridiculous. Among what I had gathered, although there were several facts that I had already obtained through the game, the

amount of information that was not revealed in the game or were only alluded and not properly revealed, was exceptional. I started to talk.

“Originally, your family of the same blood consisted of two other sisters and three brothers..... Though there was no insufficiency in numbers, in regards to sustaining the Imperial family, after having faced mysterious deaths after deaths, only the Imperial Princess and Crown Prince, only the two of you remained.”

“.....”

“The rumors about these tragic deaths are abundant. The Crown Prince had murdered them, no, they had a secret feud that resulted in mutual destruction. They were sacrificed because of a plot by several nobles.....”

But they were all wrong.

All of them.

I stared straight at the Imperial Princess.

“According to what the Crown Prince had told me, he claimed that, in truth, you, the Imperial Princess, had murdered all of your siblings. Is that true?”

The Imperial Princess nodded.

“That is true. I killed them all.”

“Though there was a 6-year-old little brother among them.....”

“That is so. Is there a problem?”

“.....”

I let out a bitter laugh.

“Despite that, do you not feel some sadness, Imperial Princess?”

“Of course I feel sorrow. However, what problem is there in sorrow? As one should feel sorrow for something that is sad, one must also take the lives of the things which must be killed. That is the way I live. By any chance, do you live differently, Demon Lord?”

Without any change, the Imperial Princess’ face remained cold. Her face stayed the same ever since she had first entered the tent and even while she was playing Go. It did not feel as if she was particularly managing her facial expressions. The Imperial Princess was most likely sincerely asking me ‘if there was a problem with that?’. I scratched my head and replied.

“No. I roughly live like that as well.”

“I somehow knew that would be the case. You live quite pitifully.....”

“Is that something you should be saying to me.....?”

The wind finally blew after quite a while. It was a wind that contained moisture. The white fabric heaved like curtains and momentarily blocked our vision of one another. Once the breeze had settled down, we could see the other’s face again. The Imperial Princess spoke.

“I do not know if my brother had told you or not, but my brother had made my first and second sisters into his lovers in secret. They were committing incest.”

“I have heard.”

“Whether they committed an incestuous relationship or not, I did not care. However, since I was going to have to compete against my brother for the throne later on, when that happens, I figured it would be a bit bothersome and cumbersome if my sisters were to support him. Thus, when my brother and sisters were exhausted after having shared the same bed, I used that opportunity to kill them.”

“.....”

“My brother was unable to show any defiance. My sisters were murdered on his bed while they were naked. If this incident were to be known elsewhere, then my brother would be suspected immediately. Did he have intercourse with his blood siblings? Did he murder them after having slept with them.....? As a result, my brother was desperate to hide my sisters’ dead bodies. My brother is a pathetic man.”

“Mm. A clean approach.”

“That is what I think as well.”

The Imperial Princess let out another sigh.

“I dealt with the rest of my brothers whenever the opportunity presented itself. However, I made sure to leave no evidence behind in any of those incidents. Only my brother had the sole belief that it was me. Albeit, he was a man who did not have the confidence to even reveal that belief to others..... Demon Lord, you were able to successfully coax that brother of mine.”

“I am uncertain of the exact details, but his animosity towards you is quite impressive. Once I swore that I would become the enemy of the Imperial Princess, his mouth opened on its own. Well, it is thanks to that animosity that I was able to obtain so much information without having to go through any particular trouble.”

“Did you acquire evidence?”

I shrugged my shoulders.

None at all.

I only had the testimony of the alcoholic Crown Prince.

After examining my face, the Imperial Princess closed her eyes.

“That is a relief. A close call, if you may. If you, perhaps, also had evidence, then I would have been done in by you without being able

to budge an inch, Demon Lord. Far from unifying the continent, to think that I was nearly taken out before I could ascend to being the empress.....”

“But I have the testimony of the Crown Prince. It would become quite bothersome if the Crown Prince were to go around speaking of your crimes publically. Your honor and reputation would receive a great blow.....”

“Who would believe the testimony of a Crown Prince who was captured by the army of a Demon Lord? At most, people would overlook it as him having been either threatened or brainwashed by the Demon Lords. Furthermore, that man may be my brother, but he does not possess even the slightest bit of trust from the nobles. That will be a vain attempt, Dantalian.”

“Will it truly be in vain?”

“.....”

“Do you wish to test it out, Elizabeth?”

The Imperial Princess tapped her forehead with her finger. No matter how incompetent the Crown Prince was, he was still the crown prince. Even without evidence, he could still raise unrest within the imperial society with his firm beliefs alone.

As the Imperial Princess had pointed out, that disturbance could end up being small.

Or perhaps, that unrest could become incredibly substantial.

There was no such thing as 100% certainty.

The Imperial Princess slowly moved her lips.

“What are your conditions?”

“My castle was destroyed because of the Margrave of Rosenberg.

Albeit, I may be living without a home by wandering around here and there, even that has become quite tiresome now. Assist me in procuring a new home.”

“.....Are you saying that you want me to present you the margrave’s territory?”

“Mm. Since the person to have taken away my home is the margrave, then would it not be appropriate for me to take the margrave’s home?”

“.....”

Tap tap tap.

The tapping of the Imperial Princess’ finger became stronger.

The sound of horses could be heard on the plains. Once the horses on one side of the plains started to neigh, the horses in the encampment on the opposite side of the field let out a low neigh as well. The sound of neighing lightly crossed over the tent and died down between the two of us. Until the sound of horses had become silent, the Imperial Princess and I were staring at one another.

“Fine. I accept.”

“Then I will momentarily return to my camp.”

“I shall as well.”

We returned to the tent after 30 minutes. I had brought the Crown Prince with me while the Imperial Princess had brought a certain man who was in his prime and a young boy, both of whom were bound together by a rope. They both had a fabric wrapped around their faces. She had dealt with them as so in order to prevent others from knowing who they were. I yielded the Crown Prince to the Imperial Princess first.

“Here. It’s your brother.”

“It is quite touching to be able to reunite with my family.”

The Imperial Princess talked about her emotions flatly. She took the rag off of the Crown Prince’s face. While letting out a gasp, the Crown Prince quickly looked around at his surroundings.

“W-Where is this?Elizabeth? What are you?”

“I had sent you to die, but it seems you have returned alive, brother.”

The Imperial Princess breathed lightly.

“You have made things quite troublesome for me. This is most likely the greatest achievement you have ever achieved throughout your entire life, brother.”

“What.....? You bitch, how could a devil like you be well off.....”

The Crown Prince was unable to continue his words. The Imperial Princess had swung her blade and slit the Crown Prince’s throat in a straight line. While gurgling blood, the Crown Prince fell to the floor.

The Imperial Princess knelt down and skinned her brother’s face. Before the Crown Prince could fully meet his end and was still breathing, he slowly died as his face was severed off. The Imperial Princess shoved the skin of her brother’s face into her pocket.

“Thank you, Demon Lord. Seeing as his features did not change despite having died, he is most certainly my brother and not a fake stand-in.”

“Promises are precious, are they not?”

“Mm. Promises are important.”

The Imperial Princess gestured towards the two human captives that she had brought.

“This man here, who is in his prime, is the Margrave of Rosenberg’s

only son. After I gained the suspicion that the margrave was trying to start a conspiracy, I continued to keep this man captive.”

“And who is the small boy?”

“The margrave’s grandson. It seems he is this man’s illegitimate child, so he is not of a formal descent. I went through some trouble in order to catch him. This is the remaining lineage that the margrave has left in this world.”

I tore off the cloth that was wrapped around the two captives’ faces. They both had their mouths shut tight by a piece of fabric. Uh, uuh, uub...! The two hostages opened their eyes wide and looked around. I closely examined the report that Lapis had researched, thus, the descriptions of the features of both the margrave’s son and grandson. The captives before me were real.

“They are correct.”

“Do you wish for me to skin their faces in your stead, Demon Lord?”

“That is fine. Though it may be my first time tearing the faces off of people, there is always a first experience for everything.....”

“A splendid demeanor.”

“Then.....”

I dealt with the son and grandson while following the knife movement that the Imperial Princess had shown me a second ago. The Imperial Princess lowered her back next to me and pointed out the mistakes that I would make while cutting.

“Wait a second, Demon Lord. You shouldn’t leave the blade idle there like that.”

“But does this not make it appear tidier?”

“It may appear as so at the moment, but when you look at the finished product later..... It can’t be helped. I cannot watch while standing idle. Pass me the knife.”

“Tsk tsk. This is also a type of fixation.....”

“How noisy. If we are going to do it, then it would be best to do it efficiently.”

“We are going to burn everything anyway.....”

We argued with one another while tossing about. We had ruined the corpses to the point where one could no longer recognize their identities.

While lifting up the bucket of oil that we had both brought with us, we poured it all over the corpses and the tent. We then exited the tent and set it on fire. It was an old custom to burn down the tent on the occasion that the negotiations had broken down. As the black smoke rose up, it notified both armies that the war was going to start from now on. The white tent was completely engulfed in flames instantly. While watching the flames, I spoke.

“It is a bit of a shame that the Go board has to burn.....”

“Is it not magnificent for it to burn as it is? The record of the match is in our heads anyway, so we can look back at it whenever we desire.”

“Mm.”

I shared a handshake with the Imperial Princess.

“In one way or another, that was a good negotiation, Imperial Princess.”

“I am also satisfied. By the way, Demon Lord. I will give you half of the world, so will you not become my subordinate? If the two of us were to combine our strengths, then we could hasten the unity of the

continent by a decade.”

“I agree.”

I held the Imperial Princess’ rough hand tightly.

“However, Imperial Princess. Have you heard about this kind of story before? In the past, there was a conqueror who was the second greatest in the world. The conqueror had everything in the world. One day, the conqueror visited a sage. This sage, as an elder who was aloof with material needs, had nothing that could be considered as his property. The conqueror asked. ‘Tell me what you desire. I will gift you anything.’ At that moment, the sage pointed over the conqueror’s shoulder and replied. ‘Get out of my way. You are blocking the sunlight that is coming towards me.’ The conqueror lamented for a long time and left that spot. According to the legend, the conqueror said this. If I was not born as a conqueror, then I would have wished to have been born as that sage.....”

The Imperial Princess raised her brows as if she was in awe.

“That is an interesting tale.No, that is truly an interesting tale. It is a story that lets out a fragrance the more you dwell on it. I am moved.”

“I am delighted that it was pleasant to your ears. Imperial Princess, do you know what the moral of that story is?”

“What is it?”

I smiled.

“It is very simple. Either obtain everything or obtain nothing at all. Elizabeth, for you to request of me to come under someone’s command, that is quite the excessive joke. You should be the one to become my vassal instead. I shall present you half of the world.”

“.....”

The Imperial Princess gazed at my face blankly.

“.....I see there is no common ground between you and I.”

“I sadly believe that is so as well. However, is it not also our methodology to feel sorrow for the things that must be grieved and carry out the things that must be accomplished?”

“Those are indeed the right words, Dantalian. I truly do wish to make you submit to me a day sooner. I will pray that the day I make you lick my feet approaches sooner.”

“Oh dear, Elizabeth. You can rest assured that you will lose. I am Dantalian. Dantalian, I say. If you shine like the sun, then I will always be hiding in the dark moon. You will one day run out of vitality and collapse, however, I am unable to do so. I will never reveal myself, after all”

“I will more than gladly allow that arrogance of yours. You have the freedom of being prideful. But that is before someone plunders that freedom. Please bask in that freedom as much as you can now.”

“.....”

“.....”

We released our grip.

Putting the burning tent behind us, we headed towards the locations where we both respectively had to return to. That white island had drifted on top of the ocean for 3 days. It will most likely never rise back up once it had sunk.

“Ah, right. Dantalian.”

A voice came from behind. The moment I turned around, something flew towards me. I received the item that was flying towards me with both hands without thinking. It was an old pocket watch. Confused, I looked out into the distance and the Imperial

Princess shrugged her shoulders.

“I thought about it carefully. No matter how much of an incompetent piece of trash my brother may be, the crown prince is still the crown prince. The crown prince of the Empire. There would be no grace if I were to exchange that figure with merely the son and grandson of the margrave. Think of that as my small goodwill. It would also be fine to consider that as the wager of our match.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Habsburg grants their faith a single time.”

The Imperial Princess smiled.

“—And Habsburg has just now given you their one faith.”

The Imperial Princess turned around and walk towards the other side of the plains. For a long period of time, I watched her leave. I put the pocket watch into my coat and returned to the Demon Lord Allied Forces campsite.

The Demon Lords were lined up at the gate of the military camp and were waiting for my arrival. They had already seen the smoke that rose up from the burning tent. Starting from the previous autumn and continuing past the winter, that smoke had now finally arrived at this location. In other words, that was the final beacon of fire. The smoke had started from the mountain range, flowed to the governor's palace of Niflheim, crossed over the demon territory, pushed through the gates of the Black and White Fortresses, and finally, it blazed in this Plains of Bruno. That was so. It was war. Anyone would know that war was proclaimed. Despite that, I, while looking around at the Demon Lords, shouted as the thunder that must crash after the light of a lightning had flared.

“A rupture!”

The Demon Lords raised their fists into the air. They all cried out in a single voice.

— **A war!**

In this moment, there were no war advocates or advocates of peace. Only the animals that had jumped into the battlefield were present there. War! War! A war.....! From the Demon Lords to the captains, from the captains to the soldiers, the cries of beasts transmitted to everyone. The roar of the massive army of a hundred thousand soldiers struck the sky. Since the sky had let down rain, it was now the earth's turn to shed blood.

Come, oh sweet war.

Nobody is turning you away.

□ The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 3
Polles, Bruno Plains

There was a type of ceremony in a war where tens of thousands and tens of thousands faced one another. It was the proclamation of war. In this world, since people considered spoken words as something more sacred than written text, the declaration of war must flow out of the mouth of a person in a massive war that was supposed to be the most divine of battles.

The instant the speaker finishes their speech on the proclamation of war in front of thousands, the Demon Lord Allied Forces will no longer be just the Allied Forces and will instead be referred to as the Army of the Crescent Alliance. The demons revered the moon and night. By pulling in the nature that they respected and admired the most, they put their names into a strong alliance.

The moment the speech ends, the humans will no longer be something like the Human Alliance, but instead, be referred to as the Soldiers of the Cross. The cross was a symbol that represented the light of the sun. As the humans revered the sun, even if the night were to immediately arrive today, it clarified that all night was a dusk that called upon the morning.

The war between the Crescent Alliance and the Crusaders was now no longer a trivial brawl of the land. That was the order of nature and the providence of the sky. It was the history of the Gods. 1,500 years since this continent had opened and civilization was established, the gods had allowed the blood of slaughter and the screams of carnage to occur under their holy names 7 times.

Empire calendar, 1506th year, 4th month, and 3rd day. Once more, the gods had ordered the 8th book of history to be recorded with the ink of crimson blood.

As the emissary who had undertaken the final negotiation, I was nominated to be the speaker of the proclamation of war by default. It was a great honor. At the very least, it seems the other Demon Lords hoped that I would think of this as a great honor. I was not unaware of the fact that they had put everything onto me because they did not desire to have the blame shifted to them by stepping forward.

Be it the history of gods or something else, showing off was showing off, so us people of the earth could only live while eating salt.

Oh, Gods, you are truly mighty. Who could possibly abhor conveying the holy meaning of slaughter? Furthermore, since the Gods worshiped by the Crescent Alliance and the Crusaders are the same, would this not all be a domestic quarrel? I shall accept the glorious volition of domestic quarrel.....

It is fine to say that I am blasphemous. I am a blasphemous person.

It is fine to say that I am atrocious. I am an atrocious person.

I desired for the world to become more blasphemous and for people to become atrocious. I planned to acquire my wishes from the mire where the blasphemous people and the atrocious people shed their blood.

Pure and simple, my goal is to save the world that will be destroyed. I was nearly petrified by this paradox several times. Even now, I was barely able to endure the desire to be startled.

Who could deny this goal?

If altogether, the arson, the carnage, and the tragedy that I had caused, played the role of saving the world in the end, then dear lord, who could refuse me?

How desperate would the voices that deny me be, and how pitiful would they sound? Those voices will without a doubt start with 'but... however... despite that...'.
.

The fact that they have to start their words with a conjunction. This was their misfortune. They had to fold, bend, and assemble their words. On the other hand, I uttered like a person of power.

‘Saving the world is correct.’

How straightforward is this?

I wish to live like this once.

While swinging around my authority as I please and gracefully holding a glass of wine in my hand, I wanted to try saying ‘Calm down, friends, I am merely trying to save the world’. I wanted to justly enjoy my authority to no end. My wish was being accomplished.

With my vassals in tow, I led them to the top of a rocky hill. The other Demon Lords were in my path to the top of the hill. The Demon Lords nimbly made way for me as I approached. From this point on, I was the officiant who had received the words of the gods. Nobody could speak to me rashly. Even the Demon Lords, who were the commanding generals of an army corps, Barbatos, Paimon, and Marbas, were silent.

Finally, my vassals and I had arrived on top of the boulder.

That place was the plains.

A smooth field spread out before us. I wonder if it was due to the fact that rain had fallen during the dawn since a wet fog was stagnated over the plains. Past the wet fog, glimpses of waving flags could be seen. Each time the wind blew, thousands of flags and banners roared out.

“.....”

It felt as if no sound could be heard.

A perfect silence.

As there was no high or low class in the world enveloped by mist, there were no abusive nobles or witches who received scorn, no soldiers that slaughtered or subjects who were slaughtered, and instead, everything that existed was buried in fog.

The witches gazed towards me. They were notifying me that the preparation for the declaration of war speech was complete. Now the orator's voice will resonate throughout the entire plains with the sound enhancement spell.

Humbaba spread out her fingers on both hands. Since the ring finger of her left hand was gone, Humbaba counted down not from 10, but from 9. The countdown had begun.

9, 8, 7•••••.

The person to carry out the speech here will become the public enemy of the continent.

The human soldiers will curse them as they die and the demon soldiers will blame them as they fall. That was the role of the blind person in charge. The reason why I, the lowest ranking Demon Lord, was given the authority to give this so-called glorious and holy speech was because everyone else did not want to take responsibility for the war. Paimon, of course, and even Barbatos was like that as well.

6, 5, 4•••••.

In addition, I was indeed like that as well.

I did not like pointlessly taking the role of responsibility. Is that not the perfect position to be treated well until one's uses have run out? Referentially, a noble man must avoid dangerous places on their own.

Therefore.

“Farnese.”

“Aah.”

I more than gladly conceded my divine authority to my subordinate.

To the girl who avidly relishes in having their name remain in history.

I more than gladly passed onto her the honor of becoming an unprecedented celebrity and adorn anarchy.

“Have a safe trip.”

Farnese nodded lightly and stepped forward. Though I could hear the sound of the Demon Lords, who were watching us, letting out shocked noises, I ignored them. The sound enhancement spell had already been invoked. There was nothing obscene or disorderly enough to stop the speech that had already begun.

Humbaba had wickedly omitted the entirety of the last 3 seconds and activated the spell. The witches and I stepped back and grinned. Aah, we were truly jeering happily.

Even the education on the method of speech that Lapis had kept drilling into Farnese's head was all for this moment. Now, the most sacred territory of authority will be sullied by not the Demon Lords or the demons, but by a human. The holiest ground of authority will be smeared by a lowly illegitimate child. As Lapis had done in the governor's palace of Niflheim, it was now Farnese's turn to sully things.

Now then, my daughter.

Spread poison throughout the world.

—Oh, humankind, listen.

All of history until now has been the history of class strife.

Translator's Notes

1. [\[↑\]](#) Komi in the game of Go are points that are added to the score of the player with the white stones as compensation for playing second. [\[Wikipedia\]](#)
2. [\[↑\]](#) The name of this move is called 'cheonwon'.
3. [\[↑\]](#) These are the names of famous Go players. [Go Seigen](#) and [Lee Chang-ho](#). Sanae, also known as Bamboo Grove, does not have a wiki page, but he had won the 2005 national Go championship in S. Korea.
4. [\[↑\]](#) No count of the points due to a one-sided game. The Go equivalent of saying 'Good game'.

Chapter Six

Demon Lord

▯ The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian

People of the lowest class who have had their desires castrated.

This King of Peasants, who has placed a peasant as his lover, set a peasant as his general, and made peasants into his royal guards, shall speak to you. I sympathize with you all. What are you?

—Please spare us.

—If not this humble one, then at least this one's daughter.

—I will work as a hound for the rest of my life, so please forgive me.

Fire-fallow villagers. You were all weak and powerless so you prostrated yourselves like dogs and begged. Barbatos ridiculed and played around with the you, who were like that. When she had taken your lives, she did not bother to ask you all for your names. That's because your names did not have enough value to be remembered even after death. Because you were pitiful, I had furtively sneaked in irrelevant remarks while interpreting Barbatos' words.

“What is your name?”

“Do you have any last words you wish to leave behind?”

“Prepare yourselves for death.”

The moment I did so, you came to the realization that you were going to meet your ends soon and cried. Until your demises, none of your words reached Barbatos. Since you all did not have power, your words had no meaning. ‘Spare me, do not kill me.’ even these words, that are considered the most desperate in the world, had no meaning. I see that you all do not have authority. I feel pity for you all. What are you?

— For your honor’s mistress to be an outcast, general to be a human, and royal bodyguards to be witches, your honor’s good faith impales the sky. Indeed, it’s befitting of the King of Peasants.

— You must be very fortunate to be so popular with women, your honor! Please teach the people how to bed lowly harlots and spread the information throughout the world.

Witches. You had silently received the snow and mud that were tossed at us. The soldiers had scorned and jeered at you, who were like that. It is most likely impossible for a person to not even feel the slightest bit of guilt when throwing dirt at another person, but perhaps, you were not people to them. But how could you all not be people? They say that you all do not possess souls, but if that is so, who does? I see that your bare bodies have been torn, cracked, struck, and stomped upon, sullyng your bodies with cuts and bruises. Because you were pitiable, I gave you my mantles.

“I vow, that I, Dantalian, shall never return thy advice with silence, and shall never return thy suggestions with scorn. If thou art to sweat and bleed for my behalf, then I shall repay thee the exact weight for every drop of sweat and blood.”

The moment I did so, you understood that I had acknowledged you all as people and thus cried. Was this a world where people shed tears when they are acknowledged as people? ‘I am a person, I too am a person.’, were even these words, which are considered as one of the

most earnest desires in the world, not allowed to you all? I see that you all do not have authority. I feel sorry for you all. What are you?

— I'm sorry, Father. I won't do it again.....I'm sorry.....

— My father to this young lady..... this young lady, repeatedly.....

Slave. Your life was ruined because of a mistake that was not yours. People ignored and disregarded the you, who was like that. In order to make you into an existence that did not exist in the world, they had imprisoned and confined you. I see that since you are ignored and confined wherever you go, your body is your place of exile and the world is your prison. I understand that even if you were to find a lover and have a child, that child will certainly be the child of a slave, so your body itself is a damned curse. I have heard about the sad servants who had severed their reproductive organs on their own in order to not pass down their curse. To you all, there was no answer other than death. However, how could death be the answer? Because you were sad, I whispered to you.

“You are no longer the victim. You are the assailant. You are no longer a part of the weak who are offended, but a part of the strong who offend. If someone tries to take your life, then kill them before they can get to you first. It is simple. If that someone is your father, then kill your father, and if that someone is God, then kill God as well. All you have to do is take all their lives”

The moment I did so, you led the cavalry and slaughtered the enemy. Once I had given you authority, you were thus no longer a person who was killed, but a person who brought upon death. ‘The person who tries to kill me, I have no other choice but to kill them first.’, did you live while being unable to utter even once these words that are the most ardent in the world? In the end, I see that people will not kill you if you have authority. I feel sorrow for you all. What are you?

Fire-fallow villagers, witches, slaves.

Are you all pitiful, sorry, and sad people? Is that solely it? Is that why someone has to sympathize, pat your heads, and take care of you? Will you all eternally remain as kind, soft, and pure individuals if someone were to do so? Are those your true colors?

If we go now, when will we return If we go now, when will we return Our villages are burning and our sons are burning Aha, if we go now, then when will we return.....

However, were your cruelly laughing faces, which you displayed while plundering and committing arson, not also your true selves? Was immediately slaughtering the other peasants the moment you received authority, not your bare faces?

Ah, you are all not merely kind, soft, and pure eunuchs. You are the same as I. The same kind. I am a man of influence, and you all are nothing more than people who have yet to obtain authority. That is it. 'We are also the same! We also want authority!' even these words, that are the most obvious outcry in the world, must be allowed to be said by you all.

Despite that, fellows like Rosenberg simply considered you all as poor subjects. Would that be better? Do you all wish to live naively for the rest of your lives? Do you not have desires? Do you not have any cravings for authority? Do you plan to be obedient for all eternity like castrated pets? I regard you all as my equal! Therefore, since I do not consider you all as mere kind, soft, and pure-hearted subjects, since I will not simply sympathize and stroke your heads, I will not take care of you all.

Rosenberg believed that he stood much higher than his subjects. Thus, that was why he had tried to pull his subjects into his arms, and tried to save his people till the bitter end. Since the words which he

was caught by were old-fashioned, that old man was most likely in agony because of that threadbareness.

Peasants, I will take your lives if needed, and if needed, you all can take my life as well. That is what I mean by considering you all as my equal.

Is there a difference between the burnt corpses hanging on that black wall and the miserable lives that are attached to the rampart like clams?

If there is a separation in life and death, then there is only authority.

You all have the rights to desire authority and live for it. The sight of you all struggling, bleeding, killing, and being killed for authority is beautiful to me.

If he is to see you roar out as you are drenched in the blood of your enemy, then all Demon Lord Dantalian can do is shed a tear.

What are you?

You all have been nothing until now.

What must you all become from now on?

Everything.

Stab your spears into the people who have stolen your words, deprived you of your souls, and castrated you of your aspirations. Take back everything that those people had stolen from you. By doing so, one by one, you all will become wonderful as people.

— Spare me, do not kill me!

— I am a person, I too am a person.

— The person who tries to kill me, I have no other choice but to kill them first.....

— We are also the same! We also want authority.....

However, listen. Your words are too messy.

What is this? Are you talking about this? These are not words. These are the grumbles of a newborn infant. It is a noise that is also static. I see, though I consider you all as my compatriots, you do not possess a language.

Before you all can take the lives of others, you must first learn words. I have gone through deep contemplations in order to determine what sort of words should be placed down upon you all. Since your language must be a language of struggle, a language of carnage, and over all else, a language of authority.

All of you who offered your taxes to the people in power, obediently faced invading enemies and died, and only knew how to resent others because nobody would help you, will forever be dead from now on. When the Black Death swept over the continent, your fates have died alongside you.

With the mere intention to congratulate you all on your long deaths and new births, I give you this royal message.

Listen, oh, peasants. In the stead of the already dead Gods, a Demon Lord shall bestow upon you a language.

Scream with your respective mugs and respective traps.

Oh, humankind, listen

All of history until now has been the history of class strife.

There are two wars in the world.

One is the war between humans and demons.

However, the fact that there is a more tenacious war than that, a war that has been ongoing for the past 1,500 years without a single moment of rest, at that.

Do you, mankind, know what that war is?

That is the devastating war which lasts forever.

Compared to that, the war between the humans and demons is foolish.

The humans and demons have conflicted against one another merely 8 times since the beginning of the world, however, that massive war has continued on every year, every month, every day, and every second.

Free citizens and slaves,

aristocrats and commoners,

barons and serfs,

the suppressors and the oppressed.

Are you all still unable to hear

the hoarse voice of devastating war that is being fought by these people?

This is the eternal war, only this is the true war.

Even if the demons were to disappear from the continent you will all still be at war.

As 1,500 years has already flown by, and even if another 1,500 years were to flow by once more, the war of class, the war of authority will continue unchanged.

To all of the sons and daughters being oppressed in the world, listen.

500 years ago, Demon Lords advanced onto the continent for the first time in history.

On that day, the rulers of kingdoms lamented about the conservation of mankind.

Your ancestors went to war while risking their lives in order to protect mankind.

Despite that, even after the war was over, serfs were still serfs and the subjects were still subjects.

400 years ago, the Demon Lords descended onto the continent for the second time.

Your ancestors fought against the demons once more and came out victorious.

How surprising. How impressive.

You are all truly the shield which protects humankind.

Despite that, even after the war was over, peasants were still peasants and subjects were still subjects.

If you all were not there, then the continent
would have already fallen into the hands of the Demon Lords.

For the past hundreds of years, you all were the guardians of humankind, and are the owners who have carried the weight of civilization for centuries.

300 years later, on this day, the Demon Lords have arrived on the continent.

However, what is this? Oh, owners of the continent? You are all commoners who are still serfs, peasants, and slaves.

You are the weakest among the weak who are dying off to a plague!

What have you all died for until now?

You all have certainly defended the continent.

That continent was a land that remained the same before a war had occurred and even after it had broken out.

You are still in poverty.

You are so poor that your poverty feels like it will be eternal.

Even if your mothers catch the Black Death and die in your beds, you all are impoverished to the point where you are unable to buy even a single herb.

You have all lived while making sacrifices.

What were those sacrifices for?

You have all lived while going to war.

What was that war for?

For the past 500 years, have you all scattered tens of thousands of lives and tens of thousands of tears in order to protect your poverty? Did you obey those rulers and people in power because all of you desired to forever be impoverished? For this scene of your mothers groaning, your fathers being whipped by aristocrats, and your siblings collapsing while plowing the fields, in order to protect this scenery, this continent, Have you all died until now?

That is not so.

Humankind, the truth is like this.

The mankind that the monarch of kingdoms, the emperor of empires, and the aristocrats of domains cry out for is not you.

The continent that those nobles want to defend is not your land.

Those authority figures have lived to this day not wanting to protect the lives of the people and the land of the people, but solely for the purpose of defending their own lives and their own fortunes.

Oh, humankind, listen.

The things that your ancestors had protected while shedding blood was not something which belonged to the people, but something that belonged to others, solely the possession of those false nobles.

Ah, the war is over but you all are still in poverty!

That is obvious! Since all of you had helped those people in power!

In general, what type of fellows are those rulers? Even if monsters swarm to your villages, they do not dispatch their troops in order to protect you.

They have thrown you away, they have thrown you, humans, away. Despite that, the instant Demon Lords start to approach, those nobles enforced you all to sacrifice yourselves this time as well.

For humankind!

Even though the Black Death circulated in your villages, those people in power did not provide you all with the cure. They had completely thrown you, you humans, away.

Nonetheless, once the Demon Lords drew near

those aristocrats are enforcing you all to sacrifice yourselves.

For mankind!

Now the mankind that those nobles are referring to has become clear.

The humankind that they are talking about is the humans called aristocrats.

The continent that they are referring to is solely the land which those nobles possess.

What were those humans for?

They were solely the humans for the suppressors.

What was this war for?

It was solely a war to preserve that suppression.

What were those 1,500 years of history for?

Continuing on from the past thousand and five hundred years, you have all died and continued to die in order to foolishly pass on your eternal poverty to your sons and daughters!

Oh, mankind, not the mankind that those nobles say with honeyed words, but you, serfs, peasants, slaves, and true subjects.

You, the owners of this land.

You, the subjects who must all become owners.

Is something not off? Are you all truly the peasants?

As all of you are the proprietor of this land,

and rather, those aristocrats the parasites

latching onto your skins and veins,

are they not the true peasants who suck on your sweat and blood?

Since they are the peasants, then would it not be appropriate for you all to become the lords?

Why are those nobles embezzling the grains of wheat and corn that you have harvested?

Why do they not protect their subjects when they are attacked by monsters, despite claiming to be the owner?

In the end, why do they collect taxes even though everyone is starving to death?

That is because they are not the proprietors.

Oh, humankind, they are not the owners but they are thieves.

They are the bandits who steal everything that you must bask in.

The nobles only deprive. By depriving, they live in the homes you make, wear the clothes you craft, and eat the corn you harvest.

How could this nonsensical conduct have continued for the past 1,500 years?

Humankind, the reason is this.

It is because they are holding weapons.

There is no other reason than this.

If you petition for the taxes to be lowered, they raise their swords.

If you plead for them to grant you herbs, they stick out their spears.

If you skip labor in order to nurse your own mothers, they lash their whips.

Only with swords,

only with spears,

and only with whips.

If that is the case, then humankind, what must you do?

What must you all do in order to protect what is yours?

What must you all do in order to not pass down your poverty!?

Will you be sliced by a blade and die?

Will you be stabbed by a spear and scream?

Will you be lashed by a whip until your bones are weak?

There is one answer! Only one answer!

There is no other choice but to fight force with force!

Raise your axes. Grab your crossbows. Arm yourselves.

Use your farming equipment and stab their heads.

Make it so that you are the ones to harvest the things which you have cultivated.

Make things that are natural, run in a reasonable manner.

Do not continue to be fooled that you are peasants.

You all are the ones who own this land.

You are all the ones who are truly human-like humans.

Everything in this continent is rightfully yours!

You must go to war only for yourselves!

Fight!

Since no one will get back the things that are yours in your stead.

Fight!

Since no one will live your lives in your stead.

Fight!

Oh, humankind, what are subjects? They are everything!

Only you can justly be referred to as people.

Throughout history, what were commoners until now?

They were nothing!

And now, from this point on

what must you, the peerless mankind, become?

Everything!

The war to kill the demons for the nobles is now over.

Know that the true massive war has arrived.

You must solely fight for your own lives and for your own authority.

Let those parasites, who pretend to be lords, know who the true owners are with your spears, arrows, and pickaxes.

Yearn for a world where everyone simply lives as owners.

Realize the history where everyone struggles with everyone.

Make those rulers shudder before your power as subjects.

Other than your false shackles,

you all have nothing to lose in this devastating war.

Only the world that you must obtain, the everything that you must acquire, is spread out before your eyes!

Fight back, humankind!



This is the language of peasants that I have passed down.

As they are urgent and desperate, you must only speak in these ardent screams and speak solely while wailing.

The Margrave of Rosenberg and I are different. I do not expect myself to become tame towards you all, and I do not want to only be protected by you. The vassals I love the most are the ones who know how to betray others. Therefore, I can only love Lapis Lazuli. I can guarantee that Lapis will one day gift to me a poisoned chalice. I cannot wait for that day to arrive.

On the other hand, Humbaba's betrayal was disappointing. As one must not be caught if they had betrayed another, they should also, at the very least, reap all the benefits they are able to obtain when their betrayal is revealed. Even if I were to assume that Humbaba allowed herself to be caught by me on purpose, to have lost money! How could they have only received half the price of betrayal!? That is why they are lost. I have no other choice but to cater for these lost children. What can I do? They are shameful fellows.

.....Imperial Princess Elizabeth is the same as me.

We both know the fact that words are nothing more than tools. However, we also know that words are useful tools of authority.

The Imperial Princess is a girl who will rip off the entire face of a human who goes around with a bunch of makeup. She enforces everyone to go around while displaying their naked faces. Indeed, there is no other technician who is as outstanding as the Imperial Princess in peeling the skin off of faces.

But, Elizabeth.

You have only lived as the Imperial Princess who was born in the Empire.

You have no other choice but to forever live as the Imperial Princess of the Empire.

That is your depth and limit. You will forever go around while leading a group of nobles.

But I am different.

After having fallen into this world, I have constantly contemplated about how I was going to defeat you. I am an obscure rank 71st Demon Lord and you are a person of influence in the most powerful Empire. I was low and you were high. I was inept and you were adept.

In order to drag you down from that high position and shove you into the mud, I formulated a grand plan.

The first was Lapis Lazuli.

— I, Lapis Lazuli, born from a succubus and raised in the back alleys of towns and cities, a person to have worked as a third-degree merchant for the Keuncuska Firm for 10 years, shall forget her past and live solely for the purpose of being Demon Lord Dantalian's subordinate. This heart. This head. This soul shall forever be in the possession of your highness.

I had brought this cold-hearted half-breed, who was treated as an outcast, to my side on purpose and made her into my fiancée. It was not simply because she was competent. It was because she was useful to my grand stratagem. I got engaged with a peasant.

Next was Laura De Farnese.

— Laura De Farnese. As the third daughter of the Duchy of Parma and the rightful heir of Piacenza, on this night, continental calendar 1505th year, 9th month, and 10th day, with all the Gods here as witness, I hereby vow: If your lordship orders for this young lady to be your sword, then she shall become your sword. If ordered to be your head, then she shall become your head. If ordered to be your legs, then she shall become your legs. This young lady's will, this young lady's knowledge, and this young lady's efforts shall eternally be devoted to your lordship.

I had brought this illegitimate child, who was born as the child of a slave and isolated from the world, as my retainer and made her into my acting general. She, too, was useful to my grand plan. I appointed a peasant.

Finally, the witches.

— Us Berbere Sisters, born without a home, raised in the back alleys of towns and villages, and individuals who have spent our lives as mercenaries for decades and centuries, wish to now forget our pasts and find value in our lives as solely Demon Lord Dantalian's followers. Our hearts, our heads, our souls will forever be a part of your highness' possessions. Therefore, your highness, please take care of our lost hearts, heads, and souls.

I accepted these witches, who were scorned into a place of oblivion because of their lack of souls, as my subordinates and appointed them as my royal guards. The witches were indeed incredibly beneficial to my great stratagem. I embraced peasants.

Oh, Elizabeth.

This is my groundwork.

With these children, who were enshrouded in darkness by the flames of the world and had their minds burned, I shall overturn your nobles and commoners. I shall burn everything. As the pure white and detached Imperial Princess, remain at the summit till the very end. And then, be choked by the smoke that we raise and be burned to death.

From now on, the peasants of the lowest class shall be my black stones.

Aristocrats? You can take all of those. Take everything that is like white stones for yourself. I will have the initiative anyway.

Oh, peasants, my groundwork who are also my dead stones, what are you? What must you become?

Each stone that is placed on the board is a stone that will kill the enemy and will be killed by the enemy. If your lives are going to break apart like stones, then there is a need for you to become as firm as a stone first. Whenever you are struck and you are striking down others, a hard noise must resonate.

I see that your sound is still too soft. I am hearing all of your noises. Speak once more. I shall grasp and raise back up the words that were buried in the background.

— Spare me, do not kill me!

— The person who tries to kill me, I have no other choice but to kill them first.....

Your voices are limp. They are weak. Do not remain with simple cries and add the form of words. Threaten the ones that try to take your lives. Show off that even you have the slightest amount of strength. By doing so, instead of throwing up cries, you will be able to spit out words.

“We are **one**. We shall unite by countering against our enemy. If a person of influence hangs the life of one, then we shall become a thousand and retaliate. Let us see if you can handle the weapons of a thousand.”

Oh, peasants, what are you? Will you escape from being pitiful, sorry, and sad people? I have been turning my ear towards your noise. Speak once more.

— I am a person, I too am a person.

— We are also the same! We also want authority.....

A magnificent voice. Let us add a form to that. Since words are authority, and as people fall into ruin if they use their authority thoughtlessly, people will collapse if they use words carelessly as well. In order to not allow others from approaching, build a fortress and ramparts with words.

“All humans are equal. The right to murder the person who tries to murder me is equally in my and our possession. If authority is the ability to kill others, then we as well shall become people in power.”

Good. That is a rampart with a well-structured foundation. An impregnable formation. Continue to remain here.

If you all are to make a fortress, then that will thus be my fortress.

If you all are to wave flags, then my army will advance there.

If you all are to establish a world, then my world will be there as well.

Rightfully desire all you want. I shall tell you how.

Rightfully become something that is feared. I shall provide you all with weapons.

I sympathize with you all. I shall be your desires, your fears, and your deaths.

I am **Dantalian**.

The king of you peasants.



□ Blood Relative Killer, Imperial Princess of the Empire, Elizabeth von Habsburg
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 3
Polles, Bruno Plains, Human Alliance

—Oh, humankind, listen.

A girl's voice echoed vastly throughout the plains.

It was an elegant and refined voice. It was a voice that reminded one of winter because the emotions contained in the tone were thin. It was a voice that was firmly trained and stood upright in the center. It was most likely taught to her by a good teacher. Just hearing a person, who had properly learned how to speak, gave a beautiful form.

With a pair of binoculars in hand, I observed the girl standing on top of the boulder. Is that girl Laura De Farnese.....? I muttered out loud. It was the slave that Dantalian had gone all the way to the Kingdom of Sardinia in order to airlift. Certainly, that was an individual with many uses.

— All of history until now has been the history of class strife.

What is she talking about?

I gazed through the binoculars. The girl had no emotions on her face. She was a girl who possessed the beauty of snow and frost. Surely, with that appearance, it was a given that the wild rumor, that

Dantalian had brought in a human harlot because he was captivated by her looks, would arise. As her speech continued, the nobles around me started to whisper among one another.

“The start of the declaration of war speech is quite eccentric.”

“No matter what they rattle on about, the unity of us humans is unbreakable.....”

Each noble had a pair of binoculars placed against their eyes. The content of the speech was completely different to what they had predicted. Certainly, the captains and soldiers started to stir. No one has ever heard or learned about the massive war that came close to the holy war of the Crusaders.

— This is the eternal war.

However.

As the girl's words continued to firmly strike the air.

As the girl's voice continued to flutter and echo throughout the sky.

— To all the people in the world who are being oppressed, listen!

The nobles' faces contorted with rage and the faces of the soldiers twisted into astonishment. There were no bounds to the aggressive words that came out of that girl's pretty mouth. They were not words of refusal, nor were they words of persuasion. They were words that pounded and broke apart the ground that was hiding something underneath its frozen earth, until finally, pulling it out.

— What were those sacrifices for? What were those battles for!?

The girl shouted out without reserve. Her words were easily terrifying. As they were words that cleaved and caused division, they were words that divided and generated incitement and were also words that weaved and manipulated. The girl slashed at the humans with words that were sharper than blades.

“.....”

Aah.

Aaah!

I realized the other party's intention. The girl's intention, the intention of Dantalian who was hiding behind that girl and spreading his venom. That Dantalian, that Demon Lord does not intend to fight against the humans. He is luring the humans into fighting each other!

— Humankind, listen. What must you all do in order to protect what is yours? What must you do in order to take back what is yours from those thieves!?

The soldiers were already wavering. That girl's voice was spitting out a poison. Infected by that poison, the soldiers looked around at the faces of the other soldiers. The nobles were unable to regain their composure and shouted.

“T-That! That, that, what, my word!”

“I already knew well about the shortcomings of those demons, but

to say such thoughtless words!”

What foolish people.

They were unable to even smell the scent of poison that was approaching us from all sides. I felt as if I was suffocating. Only the thought of preventing that speech went through my mind.That's right. We must stop those words of division no matter what. I had to block it in order to prevent the irrevocable chaos and calamity that will engulf the continent. I quickly stood up from my chair and rushed towards the mages.

“Immediately activate the spell for our speech.”

“Your highness?”

“Did you not hear me? I'm ordering you to activate the spell.”

The mages looked at me with troubled faces. An old man with wrinkles on his forehead lowered his head.

“My apologies, your highness. The preparations are not yet complete.”

“Not complete?”

“Since we were notified by your highness that our forces will be giving our speech second, we had prepared to activate the spell exactly at that time.”

“It will be fine with just sound enhancement magic. I know how to speak the language of demons. Right now.....”

“Your highness, although sound enhancement magic is not an incredibly difficult technique, advance work is essential in order to raise the volume to the point where it can resonate throughout the entire plains. Please generously understand that magic is not universal.”

“If that is so, then how long will it take before preparations are complete?”

“At the fastest, it will take 10 minutes.”

“10 minutes.....?”

A cold sweat went down my neck.

It has been such a long time since I had last felt a cold sweat. Was it perhaps the time my brother had dragged me to his room and forced me to watch him have intercourse with my sisters? Was it the first time since then? Just like that day, which had ruined my life, a cold sweat deeply slid down my neckline. I could feel the drop of sweat slide down the line of my neck and down the outline of my chest.

“.....”

I slowly turned my head and examined the soldiers once more. They were all serfs, slaves, and peasants. Unrest spread across each and every one of their faces. Ah, 10 minutes would be too late. If 10 minutes were to pass, then it will forever be too late.....

Am I only able to listen silently?

Like the time I had to simply watch my brother and sisters mix together.

Must I suffer like this, while being unable to do anything, once more?

— Oh, humankind, what are subjects? They are everything! Only you can justly be referred to as people. Throughout the 1,500 years of history, what were commoners until now? They were nothing! And now, from this point on what must you, the peerless mankind, become?

— Everything!

As if intoxicated by a drug, the soldiers gazed up at the girl. Even though they should be unable to see the girl's face since they did not possess binoculars, with the grandiosity of her voice, the girl was emitting a powerful presence. I shuddered.

So that is Dantalian's sword.

So those are Dantalian's words.

.....That speech was most likely written by Dantalian. Aah, there is no doubt. I could hear that man's voice within that girl's voice. I could vaguely feel Dantalian's outline in the words and sentences that the girl was reciting. Regardless, why was Dantalian not proclaiming the speech himself, and had instead, sent that girl as his replacement?

The reason was articulate.

The words that Dantalian had uttered, while we were shaking hands today, passed through my brain. Dantalian was grinning widely.

— Oh dear, Elizabeth! I am Dantalian. Dantalian, I say.

— If you shine like the sun, then I will always be hiding in the dark moon. You will one day run out of vitality and collapse, however, I am unable to do so. I will never reveal myself, after all.

My heart trembled. It was difficult to admit the truth itself that my heart trembled when coming to the realization of fear and terror. Aah, so Dantalian is planning to **hide**. He plans to remain as the behind-the-scene manipulator and never reveal himself!

By placing Farnese as his stand-in, Dantalian will hide. The person to stand in the front to swing their blade and give orders will most likely be Farnese. Therefore, all the people of the continent will revere and despise Farnese. Even though the true culprit to incite them was Dantalian. While Farnese becomes that Demon Lord's horse and spreads that Demon Lord's words, Dantalian himself will be covered by the curtains of the performance and be caught by no one, allowing him to freely destroy the continent without being hindered by anything.

On the other hand.

I am unable to do so.

As the Imperial Princess of the Empire, that is impossible for me to do. I have to spend my time with hundreds of nobles surrounding me at all times. As there were always ears around me to hear the words I say, if I were to take action, then there will always be eyes to see the things that I do. Until now, I had treated my destiny of having been born as the Imperial Princess with gratitude. Not even for an instant, have I ever thought that my standing as the Imperial Princess could possibly become my weakness.....!

The girl's speech had reached its zenith. She unsheathed her longsword from her waist and raised it to the sky. Every single one of the soldiers held their breaths and were absorbed in the girl.

— I, Laura De Farnese, born as a human and branded as a slave, as a single peasant who is here now to struggle alongside you all, shall hereby declare! Be they humans, demons, commoners, or peasants, I shall struggle for the people without discriminating borders!

— You as well, fight back alongside me! Discard all the boundaries that oppress you all! Become free on your own, mankind!

That girl.....So that child is Dantalian's successor.

People were shocked by the news that that girl was a human. That was the effect that Dantalian was aiming for. Dantalian had utilized a human girl as his orator on purpose.

If the person to give the speech were, perhaps, a Demon Lord or a demon, then the soldiers would not have stirred. If the person to stand there were a noble, then the soldiers would have scorned the speech. However, Laura De Farnese, who was standing on top of that boulder, was not a Demon Lord or a noble and was simply a freeman with the blood of humans. She was a human. Since they were the words of a human, they naturally seeped into my subjects who were also humans.

“.....Ha.”

Did laughter come when despair deepened?

I ended up unintentionally letting out a smirk.

Abruptly, who I was and where I stood became clear.

I was the Imperial Princess of the Empire. Until now, I have proven that I was the one and only Imperial Princess.

However, because Dantalian had suddenly appeared in that spot, he had defined what kind of fate lied behind me being the Imperial Princess. He was an existence that defined me.

“Dantalian.....”

If I am to survive as the Imperial Princess, then I must take his life.

If I am to survive until the very end, then I must also take the life of that girl.

If I fail to do so, then the life that will fall will be mine.

“Demon Lord.....!”

A certain ooze of emotion flowed out from my heart that was tightened by fear. Aha, I am certain that I am insane. Although there were existences that I must kill in order to stay alive in front of me, I felt pleasure in life from that.

“So you are my destiny.....!”

He will most likely hide and not come out.

People will most likely never find out who he is.

But I know.

Only I am looking at you.

The universe is a meaningless crowd and if it were a solitary ocean, then a single island will drift on top and we will be seated there facing one another. Like the time we had faced the other with black and white stones, while in the center of today’s shower, our future from now on will be spent facing the other. Demon Lord, you are my destiny and I will surely be your fate as well.

Agitated, the nobles shouted. They browbeat the soldiers while striking their cheeks.

“You fools! What are you staring at absentmindedly!? Are you all unable to shout and prove to them that you are the subjects of the Empire!?”

“Do you want to become a traitor and die!?”

The soldiers quickly got down onto their knees and obeyed the nobles. However, I was aware. The other soldiers around them were glancing at the nobles with cold gazes. Was this the scenery that the

Demon Lord had drawn in his dreams?

The aristocrats shouted and the officers and men remained silent. Since the angry scoldings were burly, they surged upwards to the sky, but quickly dissipated, however, the silence was cast down heavily and spread out widely. The air that was separated into two layers felt like the world that was soon going to be split into two sections. I, Elizabeth, will fall into the gap between that tear.

But what is the issue?

My life has become a single bliss. At last, my tomorrow was not going to be the repetition of today, and instead, be the day after today. Today, Dantalian had already fulfilled the promise that he had made me.

— Demon Lord, could you die here together with me?

— I am fine with that, but is there a need to die right this instant?

— What point is there to live any longer when the light will fade after today? If it is now, then I can lightly depart.

— I promise you that the number of occurrences more pleasant than this will increase from now on.

How beautiful.

A beautiful voice. So these are the words of Dantalian.

So destiny was something that was so radiant and splendid that made even destruction into something that was blinding.

“.....Ah.”

I shed a tear for the first time in my life.

On the 4th month and 3rd day, it seems I was born for the first time.

While joyously accepting the definition of my life to kill and be killed with that man, I closed my eyes. Since there was a single strand of melody in the world that was dark, it felt as if that girl was going to continue that melody forever. I, for a long time, while dwelling on that feeling, listened to that girl's music that consisted not of melodies, but with words.....

— You all, rage in everyone's stead, and solely rage as mankind. Enlighten the people in power about who the original owners are. We shall sing. The song we sing shall be the song of vows where we swear that we will no longer descend from being owners and into slaves. The moment you raise your cries and hold your spears, the Gods will thus bring down upon us the glorious life with the name of tomorrow!

— Make them shudder. Make those authority figures tremble before the revolution of all. Other than your false shackles, you all have nothing else to lose in this revolution. Only the world that you must obtain, the everything that you must acquire, is spread out before you

—

—Oh, humankind, fight back!

FIN.

▯ Demon Lord of Benevolence, Rank 9th, Paimon
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 3
Polles, Bruno Plains, Demon Lord Allied Forces

—**T**his lady held her breath.

For a moment, the breaths of demons and humans were held indiscriminately. Though it was no longer than a mere moment, to me, it felt as long as an eternity.

This lady has come to the realization. That the time that had just brushed by this lady, that the time that had scraped and flowed through every mortal in these plains, was not simply a demanded time but a moment of history instead. From this day forth, every historical book to be written will have no other choice but to use **an entire page** for this moment. For a single moment in this place, history existed.

However.

“.....What the fuck is that?”

Similar to everything else, since history is something that is also buried underneath time and flows by, it is something that cannot be seen once it has passed. One individual at a time, the mouths of the Demon Lords, who had held their breaths because of something uncontrollable, opened. The words that came to their lips were not astonishment, admiration, or even imprecations, but.

“Why did Dantalian fucking hand the authority to give the speech to some human girl when we gave him that right? Did that idiot become mentally ill?”

Merely dissatisfaction.

That was it.

“Oi, old man Marbas. If my memory hasn’t turned to shit, I’m pretty sure our right of speech has never been taken by a human before.”

“That is to my understanding as well..... Things have become troubling. Barbatos, I’m just asking this for caution’s sake, but did you perhaps allow Dantalian to commit such conduct?”

“Am I mad? Why would I give a lowly human bitch the sacred position of rallying the Crescent Army.....? In any case, I wonder if it’s because Dantalian is a rookie since he sometimes doesn’t know what’s right and wrong. That kid doesn’t know circumstance.”

“Not only is the form of the speech a problem, but the content of the speech has many issues as well. Planting the seed of division into the humans is excellent, however, how could segregating humans and demons be wrong? Though it seems Dantalian had used a defector of human birth as his performer in order to shake the enemy army..... He has gone too far. It goes against what is right and goes against custom.”

“Yeah. She’s saying something nonsensical.”

Aah.

This lady’s head became hazy because of the conversation shared between Barbatos and Marbas. That did not remain as the reaction of merely those two Demon Lords. All the Demon Lords who had witnessed that speech were most likely thinking along those lines as well. Prejudice or ignorance, or rather, a sense of disdain that should just be called blindness flowed through the atmosphere. Feeling suffocated by that sensation, it became difficult for me to breathe.....

Humans and demons are equal. Commoners and nobles are equal. Therefore, as all the people, regardless of one’s race, should be in

harmony, everyone should respect one another while disregarding one's class..... This simple and clear truth could not be seen by their blind eyes. They could not see it at all. This lady was barely able to open her lips.

“Everyone.....”

“Hm?”

“Everyone, were you all unable to realize the meaning of that speech?”

“What are you talking about?”

Barbatos drew her brow together. A trivial body gesture such as that was more than enough to prove Barbatos' natural ignorance. This lady gives up on trying to persuade her. It is impressive, Barbatos. You have the ability to repel this lady with the mere movement of your brow. I express my respect towards your ignorance.

“First, let's punish Dantalian once the speech on the humans' side is over.”

Punish? What do you mean by punishment?

This lady opened her eyes wide and gazed at Marbas. Beside Marbas, Barbatos was nodding her head as if it were obvious.

“If it had gone to only the mid-point, then we would have praised him, but since he has crawled at the absolute bottom, there is no other choice. We're in a war, so for form's sake, let's just sentence him with confinement. And for that human, just whip her until she is nearly dead and pass it on adequately. If we really kill her then Dantalian would be pitiful.....”

Confinement?

Whipping?

What sort of nonsense did they say just now?

.....Barbatos has made Dantalian into her kept man. However, I am aware. I am aware that, by nature, Barbatos is not an individual who would share love with another. This lady had easily come to the conjecture that Barbatos was merely binding Dantalian with her body because he was necessary.

Regardless, to be able to do that so simply.

To be able to cast away the comrade and lover, who had saved her life and the lives of her army a month ago, like dirt.

“.....”

Barbatos' judgment may be correct in terms of political schemes. However, as that was not righteously correct, it was not politically correct either. This lady considers the rule that does not straightly seek justice and vastly ponders one's reign, as something that is merely evil. Yes, without question, Barbatos is an evil woman.

This lady bit her lip and immediately went into calculating.

.....If this lady's faction could truly be able to obtain superiority in the situation where we go against both Barbatos and Marbas at the same time. If the other Demon Lords, who follow this lady, would truly agree to the decision obediently in the situation where I incorporate Dantalian into this lady's Mountain Faction after having been hostile towards him all this time. All sorts of situations and hypotheses mixed together chaotically. In the center of that suffocating fog, a single sentence stood out naturally.

Just now,

I have seen for the first time in my life a person who had the same way of thought as I did.

“.....”

This lady’s silence deepened. It is not the depth of an investigator who was heading down towards the bottom. It was the depth of a survivor who was sinking because there was no bottom or boundary. I have lost my path. It is suffocating.

.....Paimon, you must not act out of emotions. Rationally, consider the political impact that would occur if you were to shelter Dantalian. Moreover, though I believe in the equality of commoners and nobles, I also acknowledge the **necessity of peasants**. People of ignoble birth exist everywhere. Witches are an example of that. However, Dantalian would most likely embrace even those peasants as well. Our way of thought is **very slightly** different. In short, there is no need to assimilate myself with Dantalian on an emotional level. Calm down. Emotions will only ruin you. Calm down. An opportunity will always come.....

“Wait. Now that I think about it. Can’t we just drag Dantalian here right now?”

Barbatos had spoken.

“The orator is that human anyway, so we can leave her be and just bring Dantalian here to punish.”

“Indeed, that is a fair point. You bring him.”

.....

Paimon.

You cannot.

Look back at yourself objectively. You are the leader of the Mountain Faction. You are in possession of the largest faction within the Demon Lord armies. If you determine your position on impulse,

then that influence will be directly taken in by the other Demon Lords. Please. If you have lived for 500 years then you should be sensible. Is it not sufficient for the Demon Lord, who forever behaves like a child, to remain as solely Barbatos? That is right, Paimon. Calm down. The reason why you always feel suffocated is because you think that you are suffering from angina. If you inhale slowly, then everything will be alri.....

“Hey, bitch.”

“Ah?”

“Why are you wordlessly blocking my fucking way, you bitch?”

Barbatos was looking up at my face from below. That vulgar face, which looked like it would spit right this instant, verified how Barbatos-like she was.

.....Ara?

When did this lady walk here?

I do not recall having walked here. Clearly, I was standing at the other side a second ago. Right now, this lady was blocking Barbatos' path towards Dantalian. This is strange. This is really strange. If I do not return quickly.....

“You fucker, try living while taking out some fat from your chest. Since you shove your stomach fat into your tits, a shitty smell is coming off. Really, a fucking vomit-inducing scent is emanating since the smell of your tits and the smell of oil is mixed together.”

“.....”

If I do not return quickly.

“Oh? You aren't going to fuck off? What are you going to do if you glare at me? In any case, you really do live up to your name as the most ragged bitch among the succubi since even your gaze is fickle.

There are countless numbers of demons who want to do it through your eye socket, and yet you've managed to live without becoming one-eyed yet? Do you want me to introduce you to someone? Or will you lower your eyes before I introduce you to them?"

"....."

Please.

Rationally.

Not emotionally.

"Hey. Hey. Move it. You aren't going to move? Did this bitch go insane? Fuck—."

"Is the person who's emanating the foul scent of breasts not you, Barbatos? I thought that I was unable to see you since you were so short, but after looking at it today, your breasts are also so small that I thought you were a man. How about putting a clear-cut indication somewhere on you in order to allow other people to know that you are a girl? That's right. Such as writing the words "I am a whore" in red letters on your forehead, try something like that. Is it not good since it is so distinct?"

Ah.

Aaaaah.

I-I am not saying this!

I am not uttering these words because I want to!

My body, the body that had moved on its own a second ago, was now controlling my mouth and moving my tongue on its own volition. Yes. It is true. This is not my intention, but—.

"What nonsense are you saying? The whore is you, you ragged bitch. They say that the number of castaway demons, who went into

your hole and weren't able to find their way out, reaches nearly 200 people this year. Is that why your belly is so flabby since you have 200 people inside you? Whores go around saying that they 'devour men', but you must be quite well off since you literally go around eating men, huh?"

—This dog bone-like girl.

Does she want to die?

"Why is this child, who could not satisfy the appetite of even a goblin if one were to twist and sever off her limbs, throwing an epileptic fit and trying to start a fight with this lady while not knowing of her place? Hm? Since their chest is already flat, should we shave their hair and make their head flat as well? It seems that they have yet to learn how to fix their dog-like antics from their childhood and is coming at me again, despite the fact that I had already once shaved their head 300 years ago when they went insane. If they understand that their chest is ugly, then they should at least rip their mouth out and attach it to their nipple and pretend to have breasts. You seem to be living quite well despite having such a shameful washboard attached to you. Well, since your subordinates are corpses that had come back to life, they most likely do not have anything down there. Your subordinates do not have anything below, and you do not have anything above, so your mutual settlement is quite marvelous. Though I am only saying this because the sight of you getting along with your corpses is so pretty, since you are playing with dead corpses anyway, can you not die a little as well?"

"Aaaaaaang—?"

"What will you do by glaring at me?"

Barbatos and I glared at each other ferociously. Do you think someone does not swear because they do not know how to? Because

they have dignity and rationality, they are restraining themselves. They are an existence that is completely different from you who lacks both face and sense.

In that moment, the sound of footsteps could be heard. It was Dantalian. Having discovered us making a ruckus, Dantalian carefully approached us.

“I apologize. The speeches on both sides have yet to come to an end, so if Barbatos and Miss Paimon can be quiet for a moment.....”

“Hey, Dantalian. You came at a good time.”

Barbatos got on her tiptoes and looked at Dantalian. She most likely intends to grab Dantalian like this and punish him. Though they had stated that it was going to be nothing more than a punishment for formality’s sake, formality is where punishment starts from. Do you think this lady will leave it be?

“Why are you doing the speech so poorly like that? Get hit by me a bit. For now, go inside a cage and repent on your life—.”

“Be quiet, Barbatos.”

“.....What?”

“I said to be quiet.”

This lady stretched out her right arm and put it between Barbatos and Dantalian. Yes, I obstructed her. In the end, I blocked her.

Rationality? Political calculations? Put all those things away. Since long ago, this lady has lived based on her emotions. Despite doing so, this lady was able to form the greatest faction within the army of Demon Lords. Thus meaning, the more this lady acts according to her emotions, the more fortune comes rolling to her feet. Verification is complete. I will not accept any counter-arguments.

For now, if I am able to witness the sight of this child in front of me

contorting her face, I will be satisfied with that.

“Henceforth, Dantalian is no longer the ally of the Plains Faction, but instead, is a Demon Lord who is supported by the Mountain Faction led by myself, Paimon. If you wish to punish Dantalian, then either obtain the consent of the Mountain Faction or proceed through a formal ballot during a Walpurgis Night.”

“.....Ha?”

“Oh dear. Now that I think about it, the procedure of holding a Walpurgis Night during a war is incredibly complex and intricate. How unfortunate, Barbatos. Since you will have to return bitterly while holding onto that bitter chest, after all.”

“You..... Paimon. What are you saying?”

“Do you still not understand?”

This lady smirked. In truth, this lady was speaking in accordance to however her tongue moved while a lot of blood had rushed to her head. I am unable to even properly register what I am currently saying. It is this lady's nature to become like this whenever she becomes mad.

“That man is not your property.”

This lady pointed towards Dantalian with the edge of her fan.

“He is now **mine**.”

“.....”

Barbatos' face slowly started to distort.

That is right. This is it. If this lady is able to see this face, then she is able to endure both torture and abuse. Aah, truly. My entire insides feel refreshed. Why would one go against this lady with what little ability they have, and brazenly display their own stupidity, ignorance,

and imprudence to the entire world? Truly, for Barbatos to understand.....

.....Ara?

I looked around. For some reason, the Demon Lords around me were all frozen like statues. It felt as if even the air had frozen.

.....What did this lady say just now?

FIN.

At times, when an author sends their manuscripts out to the world, they say that 'It feels as if I'm sending off my child'. That is a comparison that is truly right. Since, be it a manuscript or one's child, a person's inside will be seriously mixed together in the thing they send off, after all.

The feces and urine of a just born infant are the chaos of the manuscript, the child's puberty is the slump of the manuscript, and the allowance they give you after leaving home is the payment of the manuscript. Occasionally, authors refer to the process of writing a manuscript as 'giving birth', but that is incorrect. The problem is raising it properly after having given birth. Only the pain of patience continues in this procedure of raising.....

Therefore, as an afterword is the letter being sent to the child that you had already sent off completely, it is the words you write with the goodness of your hearts to express the words, 'I am incredibly pleased that I do not have to raise you any longer.'. Ah! How beautiful can the world be? How much of a blessing could it be to not have to see that child of yours ever again!? Leave, leave forever..... but, if possible, send a lot of allowance. And don't visit me in person..... All I have now is gratitude towards all the things that happen in the world.

Regardless, as the person that I am the most grateful towards among all the happenings in the world is cocorip, I do not suspect that you readers were also able to feel that cocorip's illustrations were able to reach the stage of Gods without having me tell you. The color illustrations are especially a feast of surprises. I have never seen a light novel illustration with a shade as beautiful as this. Although the lines 'BRAVE NEW WORLD' and 'Everything or Nothing' are in them, the illustrations are so perfect that I feel sorry about the fact that these lines are covering the images. I am a happy author when writing the afterword. I am able to easily fill 500 pages of praises towards the illustrator, after all! Although it is possible for me to write

down all these words of praise and fill 500 pages, unfortunately, since there are not enough pages, I have no other choice but to omit those. cocorip, I give you my word of appreciation.

I said that the manuscript is like a child that is mixed with the mind of the author, but the author is even more like the child that is mixed with the mind of the editor. For example, as an alcoholic child can at least be scolded and a drug-addicted child cannot be dealt with, among those children, the child that became addicted to alcohol, drugs, and gambling, and obtained the three crowns of glory, has absolutely no answers. Mother... no, Editor... I'm sorry. Far from giving it to you quickly, though I had certainly promised to hastily give you the manuscript in the afterword of the 2nd volume, I ended up presenting it to you a month after the promised date. In the world of manuscripts, the time known as a month is, in truth, the same as 10 years in the world of raising a child. To the mother who had waited 10 years for me, I can only wail as a thankless child. Mother...! No, editor...! I'll quit drinking, quit drugs, and quit gambling..... I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Please forgive me.

Not only did the editor wait, but they had given helpful advice on character development. The editor isn't an editor who interferes with the story with advice, but an editor who leads the story into a better direction through their advice. For example, in one of the character developments of <Dungeon Defense> Volume 3, during the first meeting between Dantalian and Elizabeth, towards my contemplation on what sort of conversation would be appropriate for them, the editor advised me that 'It would be good if they said nothing'. It was a perfectly appropriate advice. If the two were true arch-rivals, then they must be able to recognize one another without speaking any words and only with a single glance. Thank you to the editor who gave me advice such as this.

The last people I must thank is, indeed, you readers.

Although I have not determined whether my manuscripts are my sons or daughters, though I did not decide on their gender (of course, there may be a third or possibly a fourth gender here), anyway, the

people who had received and kept alive these newborn children of mine are you, readers. If there are broken or wrong parts in the manuscript, then those are all the ruin and wrongdoings that had come from my mind while raising the manuscript, and yet, by the truth that the ones to endure those fractures and wrongdoings of my manuscript are you readers, I can only be terrified. As you all are not a member of the family, I can only hope that you readers will read it happily. Thank you for taking in my 1st, 2nd, and 3rd daughters and son..... Thank yo.....? Ara, is this comparison wrong.....? No, I mean..... I see.

Thank you, readers, for making a harem with my children.

2016-06-28

In a room with a working electric fan

Yoo Heon Hwa